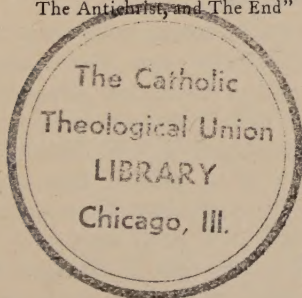


ESSAYS ON THE APOCALYPSE

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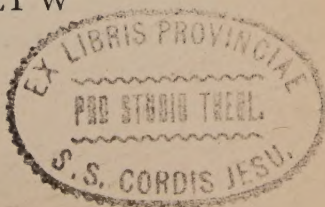
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THE PREFACE

THESE Essays are an extension of a book written by me in the year 1905, and published in January, 1906, entitled, *The Apocalypse, The Antichrist, and The End*. They are meant to show the great importance of the date of the book in every department of its exegesis.

Every scrap of evidence we possess is in favour of dating the book in the year 67 A.D. If we accept that date, the book unfolds its message in an intelligible way. If we do not, it remains, more or less, a mystery.

It has been generally assumed by Catholic writers that the Apocalypse was written in the year 96, because St Irenæus, who lived in the second century, is supposed to have handed it down as the tradition of the early Church. But St Irenæus did not say that the Apocalypse was written, or that the visions were seen, at the close of Domitian's reign; but that "The Apocalypse" was seen then. The Apocalypse, meaning "The Revelation," was the title of the book which St John wrote. What St Irenæus said, therefore, was that the book was seen at the close of Domitian's reign. This does not necessarily mean that the book was written then. A detailed explanation of this matter is given in the second Essay.

As all these Essays deal, practically, with the same subject, there is some repetition, which is regrettable, but unavoidable.

I gather from the reviews of my first book on the Apocalypse that it is taken to be the official "Roman" view of that "Scripture," because the book bears the *Imprimatur* of the Vicar-General of the Diocese of Westminster. This, however, is simply a matter of diocesan official routine. When a loyal Catholic wishes to publish a book dealing more or less with religion, he applies for permission to do so to the Bishop in whose diocese his publishers reside. If the Bishop, in this case the Archbishop of Westminster, agrees to the publication of the book, he appoints a theologian to read the manuscript of the book and see that it is free from heresy. If the examiner, so appointed, finds that there is no heresy in the book he gives the author a *nihil obstat*. The author sends this to the Vicar-General of the Diocese, and asks for his *imprimatur*, which is then granted as a matter of course. It does not imply approval of the work, for neither the Vicar-General nor the Bishop have so far seen the book. The *imprimatur* is granted before it is printed. Unless the book has singular merits it very probably troubles the Church no more. Rome, in the meanwhile, has never heard of the book, and, possibly, never will. Official Rome, I mean the Church, sweeps majestically on with the centuries, taking little note of exegetics which do not survive her heroic tests of time and criticism.

Similarly, the Catholic Church knows nothing of these "Essays" which bear the *Imprimatur* of the Diocese of Westminster. The author, a mere layman, is well aware of the faults and failings of his work, and would not share the blame with anyone. As it appears in *The Catholic Who's Who* for 1908, that "Colonel Ratton has made a special study of the

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Apocalypse," he may as well confess here that he is the writer of these Essays, and of the book on "The Apocalypse" which appeared under his initials: "J.J.L.R."; "J. J. Elar," his *nom de plume*, in 1906.*

JAMES J. L. RATTON

* Since this book went to press, the Encyclical of Pius X, on "Modernism," *Pascendi Gregis*, has been published. Books requiring the *Imprimatur* of the Church are now examined by a standing committee of theologians, to see that they are, *inter alia*, free from the taint of "Modernism." "Modernism" is a subtle blend of some old heresies with modern scientific thought and language. It is probable, therefore, that in future the *Imprimatur* will have an altered value.

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ESSAYS ON THE APOCALYPSE

I

The Writer and Date of Writing

THE APOCALYPSE, or Revelation, for that is the meaning of the word, has been handed down to us by tradition from the earliest times as having been written by St John the Evangelist. Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, early in the second century, attributed it to St John. So also did Justin Martyr. He mentions "the revelation of John," plainly calling it the work of the Apostle (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* iv. 18). Justin lived at Ephesus A.D. 135. Melito, Bishop of Sardis, A.D. 165, wrote a treatise on the Revelation of John, according to Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* iv. 26). St Irenæus, in the latter part of the second century, described it as the Apocalypse of St John (*advers. Hæres.* v. 30). Apollonius, of Ephesus, quotes it as testimony about the same period (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* v. 18). Tertullian, in Africa, at the beginning of the third century, quoted the Apocalypse against Marcion (*contra Marcion.* III. 14-25). Hippolytus, at Rome, ascribed the book to St John, about the same time. Clement of Alexandria and Origen, both belonging to the early part of the third century, also assigned the book to St John.

Towards the end of the second century a religious controversy arose in Asia Minor, which was destined to have a remarkable reaction on this question of the authorship of Revelation. The Montanists appeared at Phrygia, and for a long time riveted the attention of the early Church on their doings in that

part of the world. Montanus, the founder of the new movement, was deeply impressed with two ideas which were very prevalent in the early Church. One was the speedy second coming of Christ; the other was His reign upon earth for a thousand years. These ideas, which sprang probably from the Jewish "parousia," found a good deal of support, as they were believed by many to be deducible from the Apocalypse of St John.

Montanus, basing himself on the Apocalypse, "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. xx. 4), and, "Behold, I come quickly" (Rev. xxii. 7), predicted a millennium of material pleasures, to be enjoyed upon this earth in company with our Lord. He proclaimed himself a prophet, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and predicted that Christ would speedily appear at Pepuza, in Phrygia. He called upon all Christians to prepare for His second coming by mortifying the flesh, by fasting, by eschewing matrimony, by resuming the first fervour of the Church, and by seeking the martyr's crown.

It is quite possible that Montanus got all these ideas from misapplied knowledge of the Apocalypse. In the Letter to the Angel of the Church of Ephesus we read: "But this I have against thee that thou hast left thy first charity. Be mindful, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and do penance, and do the first works, or else I come to thee, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, unless thou shalt have done penance" (Rev. ii, 4-5). This admonition, addressed to a church in his own neighbourhood, might seem to Montanus as a call to the primitive Christian life, and as indicating Christ's coming to Asia Minor.

The avoidance of marriage would easily flow from

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the description of the 144,000 martyrs in heaven, given in the Apocalypse: "These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins" (Rev. xiv. 4). The call to martyrdom pervades the Roman theme of the Apocalypse. Possibly because these ideas appeared to find sanction in the Apocalypse, and because they were widely spread and more or less traditional, the Montanist schism, for so it became in time, met with great success at first.

But the Bishop of Rome, with the majority of the bishops of the Church, were against it, and opposed it more and more effectively as they gained in authority and as the organisation of the Church crystallised into form. Montanus would have all Christians give up their missionary work and repair to Pepuza, there to await the coming of our Lord. This would have been a retrograde movement and a reversal of our Lord's command, "Going therefore teach ye all nations" (Matt. xxviii. 19). On the death of Montanus Montanism passed into the hands of female leaders, who pretended to inspiration. It fell away from its original ideals, and as we gather from Apollonius of Ephesus, who wrote about it A.D. 190-200, it fell into disreputable ways. His writings have disappeared. But Eusebius quotes him very freely (*Hist. Eccl.* v. 18). Montanism was declared to be an heretical system by the Synod of Iconium in the year 253. It disappeared altogether in the fourth century. Millenarianism remained, however, until the fifth century. Many eminent men were found among its adherents. Papias, Barnabas, Justin Martyr, St Irenæus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus were all, more or less, millenarian.

In the meanwhile the credit of the Apocalypse, as a Scriptural canon, had been severely shaken.

Churchmen, especially in the East, where Millenarianism and Montanism most prevailed, and where controversy was most heated, looked upon it with grave suspicion, as the source whence the twin evils, Montanism and Millenarianism, were derived.

The extreme anti-Montanists rejected it altogether.

Dionysius of Alexandria, who wrote about the years 240–250, has left us a record of the reputation of the Apocalypse amongst Eastern Churchmen in his time. He says: “Some, indeed, before us have set aside, and have attempted to refute, the whole book, criticising every chapter, and pronouncing it to be without sense, and without reason; they say it has a false title, for it is not of John. Nay, that it is not even a revelation, as it is covered with such a dense and thick veil of ignorance that not one of the Apostles, and not one of the holy men, or those of the Church, could be its author. But that Cerinthus, the founder of the sect of Cerinthians, so called from him, wishing to have reputable authority for his own fiction, prefixed the title. For this is the doctrine of Cerinthus, that there will be an earthly reign of Christ; and as he was a lover of the body, and altogether sensual in those things which he so eagerly craved, he dreamed that he would revel in the gratification of the sensual appetite, *i.e.*, in eating and drinking, and marrying; and to give the things a milder aspect and expression, in festivals and sacrifices, and the slaying of victims. For my part, I would not venture to set this book aside, as there are many brethren that value it much; but, having formed a conception of its subject as exceeding my capacity, I also consider it to contain a certain concealed and wonderful intimation in each particular. For, though I do not understand, yet I suspect that

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some deeper sense is wrapped up in the words, and these I do not measure and judge by my private reason; but allowing more to faith, I have regarded them as too lofty to be comprehended by me, and those things which I do not understand, I do not reject, but I wonder the more that I cannot comprehend. . . . For blessed, says he, is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book, and I, John, who have seen and heard these things. I do not, therefore, deny that he was called John, and that this was the writing of one John. And I agree that it was the work also of some holy and inspired man. But I would not easily agree that it was the apostle, the son of Zebedee, the brother of James, who is the author of the Gospel, and the General (Catholic) Epistle that bears his name."

A little further he adds: "But John never speaks as of himself (in the first person), nor as of another (in the third), but he that wrote the Apocalypse declares himself immediately in the beginning. . . . But neither in the second nor third Epistle ascribed to John (the Apostle), though they are only brief, is the name of John presented. But anonymously it is written, *the presbyter*. But the other did not consider it sufficient to name himself but once."

"That it is a John that wrote these things we must believe, since he says it, but what John it is, is uncertain. For he has not said that he was, as he often does in the Gospel, the beloved disciple of the Lord. . . . I am of opinion that there were many of the same name with John the Apostle. . . . I think, therefore, that it was another one of those in Asia. For they say that there are two monuments at Ephesus, and that each bears the name of John. . . ." (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* vii. 25).

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In this passage Dionysius reveals the prejudice that is in his mind in dealing with the authorship of the Apocalypse. He does not deny its value, or that it is written by John. But he will not allow that it is written by St John the Evangelist, because he will not have that great name used as a shield by Montanists or Millenarians. Eusebius quotes Dionysius on the Apocalypse at great length (other passages will follow), because he, writing in the early part of the fourth century, was equally opposed to Millenarianism, then still extant.

Millenarianism continued to have adherents in the West until the time of St Augustine, about the year 420. He first showed that the Church of Christ was the Kingdom of Christ which was destined to flourish on earth for a thousand years.

Bearing these things in mind, it will not be surprising if we find a certain amount of special pleading in this attack on St John's authorship of the Apocalypse.

Basing himself on Papias, who was supposed to have referred to two Johns, as co-existing at Ephesus, in Apostolic times, Dionysius argues that the Revelation was written by the second John, not the Evangelist. He strengthens his case by the mention of two tombs at Ephesus, each dedicated in the name of John.

It will appear, presently, that Papias did not say that there were two separate Johns, though he would have said so plainly if that was what he meant to say. For he laid himself out to be the collector of the Apostolic traditions of his time. Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, throws some light upon this question of the two Johns.

Eusebius begins by saying, " There are said to be

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five books of Papias." He then quotes a fragment from the "preface to his discourses." Later in the same chapter he makes a second quotation, apparently from the same preface. He does not seem to have had any of "the books" before him, since he does not specify any one of them; he relies, apparently, on St Irenæus for his information about the works of Papias.

This, so-called, "fragment" from Papias is as follows: "But I will not hesitate to record for thee, together with the interpretations, all the things which I once learned well from the Presbyters, and kept well in my memory, that so I may confirm their truth. For I took pleasure, not in those who are great talkers, as the multitude do, but in those who teach the truth; not in those who relate alien commandments, but in those who record such commandments as were given by the Lord to the faithful, and spring from the Truth itself. If, therefore, anyone came who had been a follower of the Presbyters, I would ask him about the words of the Presbyters; what Andrew, or what Peter said, or what Philip, or what Thomas or James, or what John or Matthew, or any other of the disciples of the Lord. And as to the things which Ariston and "John the Presbyter," the disciples of the Lord, say, for I did not think that the things which are contained in the books were as much use to me as what came from a living voice still remaining among us" (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 39).

Eusebius comments on this as follows: "Where it is also proper to observe that the name of John is twice mentioned. The former of which he mentions with Peter and James and Matthew, and the other apostles, evidently meaning the evangelists. But in a

separate point of his discourse he ranks the other John with the rest not included in the number of apostles, and placing Ariston before him, he distinguishes him plainly by the name of presbyter, so that it is here proved that the statement of those is true who assert there were two of the same name in Asia, that there are also two tombs at Ephesus, and that both are called John even to this day, which it is particularly necessary to observe. For it is probable that the second, if it be not allowed that it was the first, saw the revelation ascribed to St John. And the same Papias, of whom we now speak, professes to have received the declarations of the apostles from those that were in company with them, and says also that he was a hearer of Ariston and the presbyter, John. For as he has often mentioned them by name, he also gives their statements in his own works" (Eusebius, *op. cit.* iii. 39).

In addition to this comment Eusebius devotes a whole chapter of his *History* (vii. 25) to the "Apocalypse of John," in which he quotes Dionysius extensively against St John's claim to the Revelation. In this chapter we get the origin of the remark about the two Johannine tombs at Ephesus, quoted above. "For they say there are two monuments at Ephesus, and that each bears the name of John." Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea, historian and traveller, many years after Dionysius, reintroduces the story of the two tombs, still as an *on dit*, and then claims that it is capable of being proved to be true, because Papias mentions a John by the name of "John the Presbyter"; "placing Ariston before him he distinguishes him plainly by the name of Presbyter, so that it is here proved that the statement of those is

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true, who assert that there were two of the same name in Asia."

It will be observed that neither Dionysius nor Eusebius furnishes any details in connexion with their mention of the story of the two tombs at Ephesus; they do not enter into any historical discussion as to the origin or credibility of the legend, nor do they appear at all solicitous concerning its accuracy.

Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, at the end of the second century, wrote thus: "Moreover, John, who rested upon the bosom of our Lord, who also was a priest and bore the sacerdotal plate (*πέταλον*), both a martyr and a teacher. He is buried at Ephesus (Euseb. v. 24). There does not seem to have been any question of two tombs or two Johns at Ephesus then; or Polycrates, writing of St John's burial-place, would have been obliged to particularise. He wrote a letter "to Victor and the Church of Rome" about the proper time of the observance of Easter (Euseb. v. 24). Pope St Victor succeeded St Eleutherius in the Pontificate in the year 192 and died A.D. 202. Hence Polycrates stands as a witness half a century earlier than Dionysius.

There may have been many Johns in Asia, but Papias goes on to make it quite clear that he meant St John the Evangelist all through. It has been shown by Professor Drummond that Papias refers, in the first part of the above fragment, to the *living voice* of the Apostles, including the presbyter John, as handed down to him by their followers; and, in the second part, to *the writings* of Ariston and "John the Presbyter."

It may be remarked, in passing, that Papias did not put the Apostles in the order of their rank, since he puts Andrew before Peter.

Papias probably knew that St John, in his Epistles, described himself as the Presbyter. Eusebius notices, in this same chapter, that "Papias made use of testimonies from the first Epistle of John." So that Papias had the writings of St John before him, as well as the recollection or tradition of his living voice, and was comparing them together.

St John's two minor Epistles begin: "The Presbyter to the elect lady and her children," "The Presbyter to the dearly beloved Gaius." The Presbyter was evidently the title by which he was commonly known. "John the Presbyter," or "the Presbyter John," would point to him, and to him only.

But there is another fragment from Papias in this same thirteenth chapter of Eusebius. It reads as if it were a part broken off from the first. It is this, "and 'John the Presbyter' also said this, Mark being the interpreter of Peter, whatsoever he recorded he wrote with great accuracy, but not, however, in the order in which it was spoken or done by our Lord, for he neither heard nor followed our Lord, but, as before said, he was in company with Peter, who gave him such instructions as was necessary, but not to give a history of our Lord's discourses; wherefore Mark has not erred in anything by writing some things as he has recorded them; for he was carefully attentive to one thing, not to pass by anything that he heard, or to state anything falsely in these accounts!" (Eusebius, *Hist.* iii. 39.)

Here we have "John the Presbyter," according to Papias, passing judgment in the most authoritative way possible on the Gospel of St Mark. He does not say that he has heard this, or that he believes it, or that it is possible. He says of his own knowledge, decisively, that "whatsoever he [St Mark] recorded

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he wrote with great accuracy, but not, however, in the order in which it was spoken or done by our Lord," Papias evidently accepted this statement of "John the Presbyter" as coming from one whose evidence on the point was final. Only an eyewitness and constant follower of our Lord was qualified to make such a comment on the Gospel of St Mark. There was no John but St John the Evangelist, the constant companion of our Lord, who was in a position to make it.

The whole statement of "John the Presbyter," as recorded by Papias, reveals the mind of one who was intimately associated with our Lord. Who else could say, St Mark's records are not all related in the order in which it was spoken and done by our Lord, nevertheless he has not erred in anything, or stated anything falsely.

If any other John had said this about the Gospel of St Mark, men would naturally have asked him, "How do you know?" and unless it were St John, "the beloved disciple" of our Lord, there could be no answer. Any other John would be looked upon as a knave or a madman.

We have here the origin of the accepted tradition that St Mark was the interpreter of St Peter in writing his Gospel.

From all of which it may be fairly argued that Papias had but one John in his mind, and that one St John the Evangelist.

Dionysius notes that John of the Apocalypse mentions his name more than once, whereas the Evangelist in his Epistles simply calls himself "the Presbyter." We have seen that "John the Presbyter" was the commonly acknowledged title of St John the Evangelist. It was enough to stamp

the work as his, to say that it was written by the Presbyter. But Dionysius also finds an opposite fault, that St John the Evangelist does not identify himself with the authorship of the Apocalypse as he does with that of his Gospel as "the beloved disciple of our Lord."

There are two things to be kept in view in considering this question. One is that St John does not claim to be the author of the Apocalypse. The Book of Revelation is divisible into four parts from the point of view of authorship. First, those parts in which our Lord speaks and St John writes from dictation. Second, those parts in which St John sees visions and describes them in his own language. Third, those parts in which angels interpret the visions, and, fourth, those parts in which St John hears the heavenly chorus and writes down what he hears.

St John could not claim to be the author of the Apocalypse in the same sense that he could claim to be the author of the Gospel, because the Apocalypse is a Revelation direct from God.

The question also arises, Would St John be justified in proclaiming his position as "the beloved disciple" of our Lord at the head of this precious document intended for the universal church? Would there not be some risk of attracting the special attention of the Roman authorities to a manuscript emanating from such a source and stamped with the name and authority of St John the Evangelist?

If St John was exiled to Patmos in Nero's persecution, as there is every reason to believe, his high position in the Church at large was probably unknown to the authorities.

The Roman magistrates at that time were ignorant

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of the status of the Christian teachers, being accustomed to treat the whole Christian movement with profound contempt and indifference. They would therefore exile him simply as the ringleader of the movement at Ephesus. Had they known who he was, it seems probable that they would not have allowed him to write the Apocalypse and send it to his friends at Ephesus. As an acknowledged leader of the Christian movement in the East, he would have been kept, so to speak, under a triple guard. As it was, his task in writing the Apocalypse in captivity, and transmitting it to Ephesus, was both difficult and dangerous enough.

But the Apocalypse was an extraordinary production, requiring ample confirmation as to the authenticity of its character as a direct revelation from God to St John. Accordingly we find that St John mentions his name no less than five times. Three times in the beginning of the book, and twice towards the end (Rev. i. 1; i. 4; i. 9; xx. 2; xxii. 8). He sent it to Ephesus, where his disciples dwelt, in these terms, "I, John, your brother and sharer in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience in Christ Jesus" (Rev. i. 4). Such a message coming from Patmos, where St John lived in exile, could only be attributed to one author, and that was St John the Evangelist.

If there were forty Johns in Asia Minor contemporary with St John, there was not one of them who could dispute the title of "John" with him, as the author of this manuscript, successfully for one hour.

Another argument brought forward by Dionysius in favour of attributing "the Revelation" to an unknown John, is the difference of the Greek in the

Gospel and in the Revelation. The latter is written in a Greek more akin to Hebrew than the former. It is distinctly Hebraic in some of its idioms and grammatical constructions.

If we take it as written during Nero's persecution, in the year 67, soon after St John came to reside at Ephesus, there would be reason to expect the writing to be flavoured with Hebraicisms. If we admit that the book was written at Patmos, where St John was a prisoner, that it was written under the eye of his jailers, whose suspicions he sought to lull, we should expect the book to be veiled in Hebraic symbolism. If we admit the tradition that the Gospel was a later work, written at ease, in the leisure time of St John, at Ephesus, we should expect to find it written in more polished Greek (as, in fact, it is), yet on these natural differences of style rests the theory that St John the Evangelist could not have written both books, the Gospel and the Revelation.

Dionysius, of Alexandria, as quoted by Eusebius, says: "For the Gospel and Epistle mutually agree. . . . And, altogether, throughout, to attentive observers, it will be obvious that there is one and the same complexion and character in the Gospel and Epistle. Very different and remote from all this is the Apocalypse, not even tending, or even bordering upon them in the least, I might say not even containing a syllable in common with them."

"We may also notice how the phraseology of the Gospel and the Epistle differs from the Apocalypse. For the former are written not only irreprehensibly, as it regards the Greek language, but are most elegant in diction in the arguments and the whole structure of the style. It would require much to discern any barbarism or solecism, or any odd

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peculiarity of expression at all in them; for, as is to be presumed, he was endued with all the requisites for his discourse, the Lord having granted him both that of knowledge and that of expression of style. That the latter, however, saw a revelation, and received knowledge as prophecy, I do not deny; but I perceive that his dialect and language is not very accurate Greek, but that he uses barbarous idioms, and in some places solecisms, which it is now unnecessary to select" (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* vii. 25).

Dionysius says that in complexion the Epistle and Gospel of St John resemble each other, but the Apocalypse is very different and remote from them. "I might say not even containing a syllable in common with them."

We shall see that this is not a fair estimate. In the Revelation, when our Lord appears leading his forces to the final battle which is to rout the armies of paganism, it is said, "And he was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood, and his name is called the Word of God" (Rev. xix. 13).

It is universally recognised that we have here a very important literary idiom, connecting the Apocalypse with the Gospel and Epistle of St John (1 John i. 14; 1 John v. 7). The Gospel begins, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was God."

Josephus, with whom St John had certain literary affinities, says, in the beginning of his discourse to the Greeks concerning Hades: "At the resurrection and general judgment, God the Word shall come as a Judge, whom we call Christ." St John alone, amongst the Apostles uses this Jewish metaphor, "The Word of God."

Again, the Lamb of God is a peculiarly Johannine form of expression, found only in the Revelation

and in the Gospel of St John as an emblem of our Lord.

In the most dramatic scene of the Revelation, the opening of the book with the seven seals, Christ appears as a Lamb, and takes the book and opens the seals. Thereafter the Lamb appears at frequent intervals as a figure of Christ, "the four living creatures and the four and twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb" (Rev. v. 8). So also Rev. v. 12, 13; vi. 1; Rev. vi. 16, "Hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Again, Rev. vii. 9, 14, 17; Rev. xii. 11; Rev. xiii. 8; Rev. xiv. 1, 4, 10; Rev. xv. 3; xvii. 14; xix., 9; xxi. 9, 14, 22, 23, 27; xxii. 1, 3, 14.

In St John's Gospel we have the same symbolism. "Behold the Lamb of God" (John i. 29, 36). These expressions, the "Word of God," and the "Lamb of God," are peculiar to St John. They are found only in his writings, and their occurrence in the Revelation and in the Gospel seems to many modern critics to place him in an unassailable position as the writer of both books. Again, St John's is the only received Gospel which mentions the piercing of our Lord's side, "But one of his soldiers with a spear opened his side, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he that saw it hath given testimony, and his testimony is true. And he knoweth that he saith true that you may believe. For these things were done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. . . . They shall look on Him whom they pierced" (St John xix. 34, 36). St John himself, as he says, witnessed the piercing of our Lord's side with the spear, and, remembering the prophecy in the Hebrew Scriptures (Zach. xii. 10), solemnly testifies to its fulfilment. The same event is noted in

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the Apocalypse as a mark of identification of our Lord, "Every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him" (Rev. i. 7).

Professor Moses Stuart makes the following comment on verse eleven in the first chapter of the Revelation. The verse begins, "Saying, what thou seest write in a book." He says, "We say copied *into* a book but written *in* a book, and in accordance with the latter phrase is the usual idiom of the Greek; but in John viii. 6, 8 (if the genuineness be allowed), we have two cases of ἔγραφεν εἰς—showing, at least, a resemblance in minutiae between the Gospel and the Apocalypse, for the idiom is found nowhere else in the New Testament" (*Com. on the Apoc.* Vol. ii.).

The book begins, "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to make known to his servants." "That the Son receives what he is and has from the Father is the constant teaching of the Gospel of St John (iii. 35; v. 20, 26; vii. 16; viii. 28; xii. 49; xvi. 15; xvii. 2). Bede says, *Johannes more suo filii gloriam ad patrem referens.*" "Μάρτυς, μαρτυρεῖν, μαρτυρία are frequent in the Apocalypse as in other Johannine books." (Rev. i. p. 1-2). "νικᾶν is a characteristically Johannine word (John xvi. 33; 1 John ii. 13; iv. 4; v. 4), and specially frequent in the Apocalypse (ii. 7, 11, 17, 26; iii. 5, 12, 21; v. 5; xii. 11; xv. 2; xvii. 14; xxi. 7). Τηρεῖν (a Johannine word, v. 18, Ep. i. 7, Apoc. 11)" (Swete, *The Apoc. of St John*).

Other references of the same kind will be found in Dr Swete's book on the Apocalypse, a recognised authority on its Greek scholarship. So far we have found traces of mental identity and evidences of literary expression between the Apocalypse and the fourth Gospel which are very striking. We now come to an omission from the Gospel of St John which is

equally remarkable. It seems to connect the John of the Apocalypse with St John the Evangelist.

The prediction of our Lord with reference to the fall of the Temple of Jerusalem, and the signs which shall precede it, and the signs which shall usher in the end of the world, found at length, and in very similar terms, in the Synoptic Gospels (Luke xxi., Matt. xxiv., Mark xiii.), is omitted from the Gospel of St John. This was a very important prediction, and St John would not have omitted it without good reason. Besides, he was the only Evangelist who was present at the time, and heard our Lord's words.

This Temple prophecy forms one of the major themes of the Book of Revelation. If St John had already written about the destruction of the Temple, we can understand its omission from his Gospel, especially as he was barred from adding to or taking away from the words of the book of Revelation, by the words of the Spirit (Rev. xxii. 18, 19).

When the Apocalypse was written, in the year 67, this prediction was about to be fulfilled. The book itself was sent, in part, as an additional warning, vouchsafed to the Christians of Jerusalem, who were of the "elect" and "chosen," some of them of the kith and kin of our Lady and St Joseph, many of them near relations of the Apostles. The book not only devotes a special theme to the destruction of Jerusalem, but even the major theme of the Apocalypse, the Roman theme, opens with the flight of the persecuted Church of the elect from Jerusalem to the safe refuge of Pella.

Now when the fourth Gospel was written, long after the Apocalypse appeared, all these things re-

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lating to the destruction of Jerusalem had happened. It was common knowledge, and though it would not have been out of place to reproduce the prediction of our Lord, St John appears to have been held back by the twofold consideration that he had published a special Revelation from our Lord on the subject, which he was warned not to add to (Rev. xxii. 18, 19), and that the Nazarene Church of his home and household no longer stood in need of any warning. The event had passed into history. It would be an anachronism to write in the year 90 A.D., "And when you shall see Jerusalem compassed about with an army, then know that the desolation thereof is at hand" (Luke xxi. 20).

Dionysius concludes "that he [St John] uses barbarous idioms, and in some places solecisms, which it is now unnecessary to select."

It is admitted by all that the Greek of the Apocalypse is not so scholarly as that of the Gospel. From the pedagogic point of view it is an inferior Greek composition. This tells very much in favour of its having been written in the year 67 A.D. There is a tradition that St John spent some years in Parthia before taking up the Apostolate of the Greek-speaking cities of Asia Minor. In St Augustine, *Quæst. Evang.* ii. 39, the first Epistle of St John is addressed *ad Parthos*. The same appears in some Latin MSS. Venerable Bede supports this tradition. Alban Butler says that there is a tradition at Bussora, at the mouth of the Euphrates, that St John planted the Christian religion in that country. Layard in his wanderings between Mosul on the Tigris and Lake Van in Armenia found two rock tablets at the mouth of a cave, near the village of Gunduk. He describes them as Assyrian bas-reliefs. The cave is called Guppa d' Mar Yohanna, or the

“ Cave of St John,” by the Nestorian Kurds who inhabit the district. One of these bas-reliefs appears to have been of Christian origin. “ In the lower, as far as I could distinguish the sculpture, which is high on the rock and much injured, are two women facing each other and seated on stools. Each holds a child above a kind of basin or circular vessel, as if in the act of baptising it ” (*Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 188). The patriarch of the Nestorian Kurds lives, or used to live not long ago, at a place called Kotchannes, a name apparently derived from Yohannes.

These local reminders of the former labours of St John would seem to connect him with this district of Asia. Kotchannes and the cave of St John are situated on the lower step of the Kurdish mountains, which formed the southern boundary separating the ancient kingdom of Armenia from its great neighbour Parthia. It is not probable that St John had more than four years’ residence at Ephesus before his exile to Patmos. We cannot presume his arrival at Patmos before the year 62. St Paul’s Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians were written from his Roman captivity, about the year 61–62. He could hardly have written to those Churches in the way he did, absolutely ignoring the existence of St John, if the latter was at that time in charge of those Churches and residing as bishop at Ephesus. We are forced to conclude that St John took charge of these churches at or after the year 62. We shall presently find good reason to believe from his covert allusion to the crowning of Tiridates, King of Armenia, A.D. 66, that he was exiled to Patmos at the close of that year (66). If this be so, he had not had time to assimilate the Greek language completely when the Apocalypse was written.

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But a very complete command of Greek was required to deal with the visions of Revelation. Accordingly we find the strange visions of the book described in language full of fire and emotion, which breaks through the trammels of unaccustomed Greek and falls back upon Hebraic linguistic constructions.

Swete writes: " Whatever may be thought of the explanations which are offered in his defence, it is evident that he has not erred in all cases through ignorance, and it is possible that he has not done so in any instance. His eccentricities of syntax are probably due to more than one cause, some to the habit which he may have retained from early years of thinking in a Semitic language, some to the desire of giving movement and vivid reality to his visions, which leads him to report them after the manner of shorthand notes, jotted down at the time; some to the circumstances in which the book was written. But from whatever cause or concurrence of causes, it cannot be denied that the Apocalypse of John stands alone among Greek literary writings in its disregard of the ordinary rules of syntax, and the success with which syntax is set aside without loss of perspicuity, or even of literary power. The book seems openly and deliberately to defy the grammarian, and yet, even as literature, it is in its own field unsurpassed. No judge who compared it with any other Greek apocalyptic work would hesitate to give the palm to the Canonical Apocalypse (*The Apocalypse of St John*, p. cxxiii).

This leaves out of account the fact that the book was purposely obscured by the use of Old Testament symbolism to such an extent that it forms a sort of Hebraic cipher. Though written in Greek, it was not

intended to be read or understood by the Greek-speaking Asiarchs of Asia Minor.

Eusebius, in the same chapter in which he quotes Papias as a witness to the two Johns (*History*, iii. 39), accuses him of being the founder of the chiliastic view of the Apocalypse. He says: "The same historian also gives other accounts, which, he says, he adds as received by him from unwritten tradition, likewise certain strange parables of our Lord, and of His doctrine, and some other matters rather too fabulous. In these, he says, there would be a certain millennium after the resurrection, and that there would be a corporeal reign of Christ on this very earth, which things he appears to have imagined, as if they were authorised by the Apostolic narrations, not understanding correctly these matters which they propounded mystically in their representations. For he was very limited in his comprehension, as is evident from his discourses, yet he was the cause why most of the ecclesiastical writers, urging the antiquity of the man, were carried away by a similar opinion, as, for instance, Irenæus, or any other that adopted such sentiments."

St Irenæus comes very prominently into this controversy, for the tradition that the Apocalypse was written in the reign of Domitian is traced back to him. The date of writing is very closely related to the question of "authorship," as every one knows. It is closely related also to the state of development of the Seven Churches of Asia, and to the question whether the messages were intended for them or not. Also to the question of the reigning emperor or "Beast from the Sea." It is, therefore, itself, a question of primary importance, which must be settled to

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clear the way for an acceptable exegesis of the Book of Revelation.

St Irenæus's testimony on this point is as follows: "We, therefore, do not venture to affirm anything with certainty respecting the name of Antichrist, for were it necessary that his name should be clearly announced to the present age, it would have been declared by him who saw the revelation. For it has not been long since it was seen, but almost in our own generation, about the end of Domitian's reign" (*cont. Hæres.* v. 30).

Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, mentions this statement twice (*Hist.* iii. 18, and v. 8). He gave it a wide currency. Later writers adopted it without critical examination, as they had no light to guide them, from exegesis of the subject matter of the Revelations, since the key to the book was lost at the end of the first century. St Irenæus was not born till thirty years after the death of Domitian. Allowing thirty years to a generation, his parents were probably born about the end of Domitian's reign. The Apocalypse "was seen," therefore, in the adult generations of his grandparents, about one hundred years before he wrote this passage. Dr Chase, Bishop of Ely, points out that "Irenæus wrote the third book of his great work when Eleutherius was Bishop of Rome (iii. iii. 3), *i.e.*, between 175 A.D. and 190 A.D. and the fifth book cannot be of an earlier date. Domitian was murdered in 96 A.D. Hence, if the Apocalypse was "seen" at the close of Domitian's reign, nearly a hundred years had elapsed when Irenæus wrote his fifth book. Is it natural that, in reference to a vision seen, and a book composed, nearly a hundred years previously, Irenæus should have used the

expression, οὐ πρὸ πολλοῦ χρόνου ἀλλὰ σχεδὸν ἐπὶ τῆς ἡμέτερας γενεᾶς? (*Journal of Theological Studies*, April, 1907, p. 433). Dr Chase thinks that St Irenæus may have been referring to the prolongation of St John's life, almost to his own generation, an interval "spanned by the life of his master, Polycarp of Smyrna." He questions whether translators were right in referring back the ἐωράθη of St Irenæus, to the ἐωράκοτος of the previous sentence, and, consequently, to ἡ ἀποκάλυψις, as the subject of ἐωράθη. he thinks that ἐωράθη may refer to St John, and that the above passage of St Irenæus may be extended as follows: "Had it been needful that the explanation of the name should be proclaimed to the men of our own day, that explanation would have been given by the author of the book. For the author was seen on earth, he lived and held converse with his disciples, not so very long ago, but almost in our own generation." Dr Chase concludes that "there are strong reasons for thinking (1) that Irenæus does not assign the composition of the Apocalypse to 'the close of Domitian's reign'; (2) that his words imply that the book was written a considerable time before 'the close of Domitian's reign,' i.e., that they implicitly affirm the early date of the Apocalypse" (*op. cit.*).

The word Ἀποκάλυψις means "the revelation of God." That was the title of the book written by St John. Supposing that ἐωράθη did refer to ἀποκάλυψις, it referred by its title to the book of Revelation; not to the vision, but to the papyrus roll recording it, which are very different things. In the next essay I hope to show that it was the book to which St Irenæus referred, and that, as a matter of fact, the book "was seen at the close of Domitian's reign." The Reverend Dr Lawlor, in *The Journal of Theological Studies* for

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April, 1907, says of Chapters xi. xii. and xix. of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, they "are all founded on the *Hypomnemata* of Hegesippus. He assumes that he took the writings of Hegesippus as the basis of his history, and added illustrations from Irenæus, Tertullian, and others. He concludes that "Eusebius drew from Hegesippus the statement of Chapter xviii. that the Apostle St John was banished under Domitian to Patmos," and he traces "to the same source the further statement in Chapter xx. that the Apostle returned to Ephesus in the reign of Nerva. These two statements, taken together, imply that Hegesippus, if he was indeed their author, believed in the late date and Apostolic authorship of the Apocalypse" (*op. cit.*). We know nothing about Hegesippus except that Eusebius mentions his five books of Commentaries, and makes some extracts from them. They have perished. Eusebius quotes him as saying, "After coming to Rome, I made my stay with Anicetus, whose deacon was Eleutherius." Anicetus was Bishop of Rome 155-168 A.D., so that Hegesippus was a more ancient writer than St Irenæus. Indeed, he is called, "the Father of Church Historians." But Eusebius, in the Chapter xviii. bk. III., ascribes the banishment of St John to Patmos in Domitian's reign, to tradition alone, and rests that tradition on the words of St Irenæus. Hegesippus, however, may have been another authority in the mind of Eusebius for the tradition under review. For, as I will endeavour to show in the next essay, there was probably a tradition in existence before the time of St Irenæus, or that of Hegesippus, that the Apocalypse, meaning the book, was seen at the close of Domitian's reign.

As for the Revelation itself, that is another matter.

No one can go behind the book for evidence about that. St John alone witnessed the Revelation, and he testifies, in the book, that he witnessed it at Patmos during persecution, when the sixth Cæsar, *i.e.*, Nero, was on the throne. The earliest writers could not, and did not, foresee the great value of historical accuracy in minute particulars of time and place and manner, and the proof and the authority for the same.

St Irenæus is taken to task by Eusebius for inaccuracy as to Papias as follows: "There are said to be five books of Papias . . . Irenæus, also, makes mention of these as the only works written by him, in the following terms, 'These things are attested by Papias, who was John's hearer and the associate of Polycarp, an ancient writer, who mentions them in the fourth book of his works. For he has written a work in five books!' So far Irenæus. But Papias himself, in the preface to his discourses, by no means asserts that he was a hearer and an eyewitness of the holy Apostles, but informs us that he received the doctrines of faith from their intimate friends" (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 39).

St Irenæus, alone of all the ancient writers, contends in favour of at least a ten years' ministry of our Lord, basing himself, as it is thought, on Papias's interpretation of St John (viii. 57). St Irenæus was Bishop of Lyons from the year 177 until his martyrdom in the persecution of Severus, A.D. 202-208. If he meant to convey to us that the Revelation was seen by St John at the end of Domitian's reign, as has been generally supposed, it will be admitted that he used very ambiguous language.

But, supposing that he thought so himself (as he may have done, for the key to the book was lost when he wrote, and, *a fortiori*, the less important

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matter of its date was lost), we have almost perfect proof that it could not have been written as late as Domitian's persecution.

In the first place St Irenæus himself knew next to nothing about the meaning of the Revelation. He followed Papias into the millennial delusion. He did not know the meaning of the number 666, the number of the beast. He conjectured that it may have meant Lateinos, or the Roman power. He evidently, from the extract given above, referred it to Antichrist!

Now all this is very strange if the Apocalypse was written in the year 96, for St Irenæus was, he tells us, a disciple of Polycarp, and St Polycarp was in that year a follower of John.

In his *Epistle to Florinus* St Irenæus says: "For I saw thee when I was yet a boy in the Lower Asia, with Polycarp" (Euseb. v. 20). Again he says: "And Polycarp, a man who had been instructed by the Apostles, and had familiar intercourse with many that had seen Christ, and had also been appointed bishop by the Apostles in Asia, in the Church at Smyrna, whom we also have seen in our youth" (Euseb. iv. 14). In this way, through St Polycarp, St Irenæus was linked up with St John, the writer of the Revelation, and yet he knew so little about that document!

Note, in passing, that St Polycarp could hardly have been made a bishop by the Apostles. According to Eusebius, Polycarp died in the year 166, aged eighty-six years. He was born, therefore, in the year 80, and would be eighteen years of age when St John, the last of the Apostles, died. But if we follow the more probable date, found by Waddington (*Memoirs*, 1867), St Polycarp suffered martyrdom when Quadratus was proconsul of Asia, in February,

155 A.D. This would place his birth in the beginning of the year 69, and make him twenty-nine years of age when St John died. St John died when Trajan came to the throne in the year 98. He survived the other Apostles by some years. So that if St Polycarp was made a bishop by any Apostle, it was by St John alone, and that, too, evidently when he was a young man.

If the Revelation took place during the persecution of Domitian, in the year 96, it should have created a widespread sensation in ecclesiastical circles. It should have formed one of the most interesting topics of St Polycarp's familiar discourses. But what do we find? Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, "the associate of Polycarp," and St Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, a follower of Polycarp, both astray in its interpretation, and so seriously astray as to give rise to the millennial scandal, which caused the rejection of the book altogether in the East.

Are we to conclude from this that the Revelation was a dead letter to the Christian world, and that the message was misunderstood from the beginning? If we accept the statement of St Irenæus, in the usual sense, that the Revelation took place at the end of Domitian's reign, it is not very easy to avoid that conclusion.* But, happily, we are not, on the face of it, compelled to accept it in that sense. Moreover, there is evidence now that the Revelation took place in Nero's reign, thirty years before Domitian.

It does not seem physically possible that St John could have written this book in the year 96, and his Gospel some time later, for which sequence of events there is a strong tradition. A learned article on the chronology of the Bible, in Vol. XVII of the *Encyclo-*

* If the Revelation took place in Nero's reign, St John lived for thirty years, after that, to explain it. If it was given to him in Domitian's reign, he died soon afterwards, worn out by age.

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pædia Britannica, dated 1902, summing up recent investigations on the date of our Lord's birth, places the Nativity in the year 8 or 7 B.C. It is held traditionally that St John was four or five years younger than our Lord. Putting St John's birth in the year 3 B.C., he was ninety-nine years of age at the time of Domitian's persecution, in A.D. 96.

St Irenæus is our principal witness as to the age of St John. He says in the second book against heresies: "And all the presbyters of Asia that had conferred with John, the disciple of our Lord, testify that John had delivered it (sound doctrine) to them, for he continued with them till the times of Trajan." And in the third book against heresies he writes: "But the Church in Ephesus also, which had been founded by Paul, and thus John continued to abide until the times of Trajan."

Trajan came to the throne in January, 98, when St John would have been one hundred years old.

If St John wrote the Revelation, in 96 A.D., at ninety-nine years of age, he wrote his Gospel, admittedly a later work, when he was about a hundred years old. This would have been so remarkable an achievement that ancient writers would have handed it down to us as a miraculous preservation of St John's faculties in extreme old age; but they did not. On the contrary, the tradition of the ancients, as preserved by St Jerome, was that St John was very feeble in old age. St Jerome relates that age and weakness told upon St John so much that he could not make long discourses, but had himself carried with difficulty to the assembly of the faithful, to whom he spoke only these words: "My dear children, love one another" (*in Gal.* vi. 10).

The two propositions that St John wrote the

Apocalypse in Domitian's reign, and later wrote the Gospel, seem to be mutually destructive. Moreover, these propositions held together would go to confirm the contention of Dionysius and others that the difference of style of the two books make for different authors, for if one was written in the year 96, and the other by the same author a year or so later, there should be no difference of style. In Domitian's reign St John's Greek education was complete and his style was formed.

Clement of Alexandria, who wrote towards the end of the second century, makes a very important contribution to this question. He says that after the *tyrant* was dead St John returned to Ephesus and led a most active missionary life. The title *tyrant*, standing by itself, was the appellation given to Nero. Active missionary labours would have been impossible to St John, after 96, when Domitian died. It may be noted that Clement's statement concerning the Apostle's missionary activity after his return from Patmos is not a mere passing assertion, but is based on a detailed account of an episode which, if only substantially true, would go far to establish the point at issue.

This well-known legend is found in his treatise, *Who is the rich man who is saved?* It is quoted at length by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* III. c. xxiii). He begins: "Listen to a story that is no fiction, but a real history, handed down and carefully preserved, respecting the Apostle John. For after the tyrant was dead, coming from the Isle of Patmos to Ephesus, he went also, when called, to neighbouring regions of the Gentiles; in some to appoint bishops, in some to institute entirely new churches, in others to appoint to the ministry some one of those that

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were pointed out by the Holy Ghost.” “ When he came, therefore, to one of those cities, at no great distance, of which some also give the name, and had in other respects consoled his brethren, he at last turned towards the bishop ordained [appointed] and seeing a youth of fine stature, graceful countenance and ardent mind, he said, ‘ Him I commend to you with all earnestness, in the presence of the Church and of Christ.’ The bishop having taken him and promised all, he repeated and testified the same thing, and then returned to Ephesus. The Presbyter, taking the youth home that was committed to him, educated, restrained and cherished him, and at length baptised him. After this he relaxed exercising his former care and vigilance, as if he had now committed him to a perfect safeguard in the seal of the Lord; but certain idle, dissolute fellows, familiar with every kind of wickedness, unhappily attached themselves to him, thus prematurely freed from restraint.

“ At length, renouncing the salvation of God, he contemplated no trifling offence, but having committed some great crime, since he was now once ruined, he expected to suffer equally with the rest. Taking, therefore, these same associates, and forming them into a band of robbers, he became their captain, surpassing them all in violence, blood and cruelty. . . .

“ Time elapsed, and on a certain occasion the bishop sent for John. The Apostle, after settling those other matters for which he came, said, ‘ Come, bishop, return me my deposit, which I and Christ committed to thee in the presence of the Church over which thou dost preside.’ The bishop at first, indeed, was confounded, thinking that he was insidiously charged

for money which he had not received, and yet he could neither give credit respecting that which he had not, nor yet disbelieve John. But when he said, 'I demand the young man, and the soul of a brother,' the old man, groaning heavily and also weeping, said, 'He is dead.' 'How, and what death?' 'He is dead to God,' saith he; 'he has turned out wicked and abandoned, and at last a robber, and now, instead of attending the Church, he has beset the mountain with a band like himself.' The Apostle, on hearing this, tore his garment, and, beating his head, with great lamentation, said, 'I left a fine keeper of a brother's soul! But let a horse now be got ready, and some one to guide me on my way.' He rode as he was, away from the Church, and, coming to the country, was taken prisoner by the outguard of the banditti. He neither attempted, however, to flee, nor refused to be taken, but cried out: 'For this very purpose am I come; conduct me to your captain.' He in the meantime stood waiting, armed as he was. But as he recognised John advancing towards him, overcome with shame, he turned about to flee. The Apostle, however, pursued him with all his might, forgetful of his age, and crying out: 'Why dost thou fly, my son, from me, thy father, thy defenceless, aged father?' The upshot of this pursuit was that the robber captain yielded to St John, and was converted again to a life of Christian piety.

Such is the story told as "no fiction but a real history" by Clement of Alexandria, and enshrined by Eusebius, the historian of the early Church, in his collection of historical facts. Clement was probably born about the year 170, since Eusebius gives him the title of priest in the year 195. Clement tells us elsewhere that some of the immediate successors

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of the Apostles St Peter, St James, St John and St Paul "have lived down to our time, to shed into our hearts the seed which they had received of the Apostles, their predecessors" (*Strom.* i. l. p. 274).

He was much esteemed by the ancients. St Jerome calls him "the most learned of our authors." According to Theodoret, "That holy man surpassed all others in the extent of his learning."

We need not insist on the point that if St John returned from Patmos at the end of Domitian's reign he was quite incapable of the strenuous missionary labours above described. As we have seen, St John was about ninety-nine years of age at the end of Domitian's reign, and as feeble and worn out as men of that age usually are. What is the use of inquiring further how many extra years of life we must give him, to watch over the career of a youth who grew up to be a man and the chief of a gang of robbers? Suffice it to say that Clement's testimony is incompatible with the Domitian theory.

It is essential to the argument of those who would date the Apocalypse in Domitian's reign, to show that religious persecution on a widespread scale existed at that time; but of this there is no evidence. Tertullian says of Domitian, "Who was, in fact, a limb of Nero for cruelty, but I think because he had yet some remains of reason, he very soon suppressed the persecution, even recalling those whom he had exiled" (Euseb. *Hist.* bk. III. c. xx). Professor Ramsay says: "The only passage in which any pagan writer mentions punishments inflicted by Domitian for religious reasons occurs in the epitome of the history of Dion Cassius, made in the eleventh century by the monk Xiphilin" (*The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 260). He notices the absence of evidence

of this persecution in Christian literature. Gibbon says, "But this persecution, if it deserves the epithet, was of no long duration. A few months after the death of Clement and the banishment of Domitilla, Stephen, a freeman belonging to the latter, who had enjoyed the favour, but who had not surely embraced the faith of his mistress, assassinated the Emperor in his palace" (*Decline and Fall*, c. xvi.).

If there is one thing clearer than another about the Apocalypse, it is that it was called forth by the storm and stress of religious persecution, and that the motive of it is, in a great measure, to strengthen the Church to bear persecution gladly. St John says that he "was in the island which is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. i. 9). That marks a time of persecution.

In chapter vi. of the book, when the seals are opened, as a preliminary to the general action of the book (the vengeance of God on Jews and pagans), the martyrs appear and cry to heaven for justice and vengeance. This shows that there had been much persecution at the hands of pagan Rome and many martyrdoms. The book assumes that to be a matter of common knowledge. A great part of Revelation is woven round this dramatic episode. This is the vision: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord (holy and true), dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given, to each of them one, and it was said to them that they should rest yet for a

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little time, till their fellow servants and their brethren, who were to be slain even as they, should be filled up" (Rev. vi. 9-11).

It is not doubted that these souls who sent up a loud cry to heaven were martyrs. We are given to understand that they had suffered a long and bloody persecution. That is contained in the expression, "How long, O Lord?" and "Revenge our blood." This goes to show that the Apocalypse was written in the year 67, in the beginning of the third year of Nero's persecution. It does not fit in at all with what we know of Domitian's persecution. During the first persecution, when paganism strove to obliterate Christianity, when the promises of God to His Church seemed to fail, it was natural for the martyrs to cry out with alarm. It was the psychological moment in the history of the Church for the publication of the Revelation. It was the time, too, to reveal that other persecutions must follow, till the martyrs' roll "be filled up."

The survivors of Nero's reign and their children were not only salted by persecution, but the mental strain, the religious doubt, the intolerable uncertainty of the future which must have tortured the minds of all those who were not gifted with the abounding faith of the martyrs, were gone, and gone for ever. The conflict was over, and Christianity had triumphed. The Roman Empire had failed to crush it. After Nero's death Christianity spread more widely and more rapidly than before in every part of the Empire and in every rank of life, even amongst the Roman aristocracy. Moreover, the vengeance of God was seen to fall on Rome as a punishment for persecution. Nero perished miserably in the middle of the year 68. After him Otho, Galba, and Vitellus fought

for the crown and deluged the Empire and Rome itself with pagan blood.

Christians of the year 96 no longer feared the power of paganism, and even if Domitian's persecution had been severer than it was, the motive of the book was gone.

It is generally admitted now that Nero is the beast of the Apocalypse. The arguments in favour of that view will be found summed up in my book on *The Apocalypse, the Antichrist, and the End* (pp. 15, 24). But if Nero was the beast of the Apocalypse, the book must have been written in his reign. The Apocalypse reveals its own date in this way. It says of the seven heads of the beast that "they are seven kings. Five are fallen, one is" (Rev. xvii. 9, 10). Five emperors had fallen, the sixth still reigned. Who was the sixth? If we begin the dynasty of the Cæsars, with Julius Cæsar, the founder of the line, as was the custom when the Apocalypse was written, Nero comes sixth. Every other indication given in the book points to Nero as the beast. It is generally recognised now that the Roman theme of the Apocalypse is aimed at Cæsar worship. Julius Cæsar was the first to attain to apotheosis, and was worshipped as a god. It would seem impossible to leave him out of the count. Yet this has been done, and the most ingenious efforts are still made by many commentators to place the date of the Apocalypse in Domitian's reign, because they think that St Irenæus meant to say so.

Another indication of the date of the Apocalypse to be found in the book itself is this. It prophesies the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, and treats it as still existing. Almost the whole of chapter xi. of the book is devoted to the two witnesses who

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laboured in Jerusalem in connection with its fall. It is a prediction, and as such could not have been written in the year 96, twenty-six years after the sack of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple by Titus. If it predicts the fall of Jerusalem, it must have been written before the fall, not long after it. If it was written in the year 67, it was written about three years before the event, just when the Roman legions under Vespasian invaded the land of Judea, at the beginning of Nero's Jewish war, which was to be the fulfilment of Jewish prophecies. The book begins: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him to make known to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. i. 1).

The point, that the Temple is written about as still existing, is not disputed. The words of the book are as follows: "And there was given to me a reed like unto a rod, and it was said to me: Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar and them that adore therein. But the court which is without the temple cast out and measure it not, because it is given to the Gentiles, and the holy city they shall tread underfoot forty-two months" (Rev. xi. 1, 2). This must have been written before the year 70 A.D. After that there was no Temple, and no altar, and no Court of the Gentiles. No one would give directions at the present day for the measurement of the throne-room and courtyard of the Palace of the Tuileries, ruined in 1870 and pulled down shortly afterwards. How, then, can we date these directions, given in the Apocalypse for measuring the Temple, as written in the year 96? When we consider the love and veneration in which St John held the Church of Jerusalem, which was founded by the personal exertions of our Lord and His Apostles, and which in the year 67 con-

tained all the surviving blood relations and kindred of them all; when we consider the importance of the fate of the Temple to that Church; that Christians still worshipped in it; that its fate was bound up with the fate of their race and ancient creed, and with the development of the new and promised era of Christianity, we can understand one of the principal motives of the book, one of its principal themes. We can interpret the meaning of some of the things which are made known by God "to his servants, the things which must shortly come to pass"; including even the duration of the Jewish war, "forty-two months."

There are many other references to the Temple in the symbolism of the Apocalypse which would appeal to the minds of Hebraic Christians in the year 67, but which might fail to throw light on the subject twenty-six years after its destruction. Indeed, it is a question whether in the year A.D. 96 there were any of the old Hebraic leaders of the Church left in existence to interpret the symbolism of the Apocalypse. St John, the last of the Apostolic race, outlived his compeers by many years. The seven golden candlesticks mentioned in the first chapter of Revelation were removed by Titus to Rome in the year 70. "Under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God" (Rev. vi. 9) conjured up a picture of the altar of sacrifice in the Temple. "And the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar" (Rev. viii. 5). According to the ritual of the Temple, fire for kindling incense was taken from the bronze altar of sacrifice, "And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar" (Rev. ix. 13). The golden altar of the Temple was ornamented with uprights at each corner. This short list of references to the Temple in the Apocalypse could be extended.

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Taken in connection with the fact that the existence of the Temple is plainly assumed by St John in chapter xi. of the book, they strengthen the conclusion that the book was not written twenty-six years after the Temple had disappeared from the face of the earth.

This argument contrasts with that, given above, concerning the omission of the " Temple prophecy " from the Gospel of St John. That prophecy was omitted because the event had passed into history when the fourth Gospel was written. Here the Temple is referred to as existing in a description of its downfall, delivered to the Church as a prediction of " the things which must shortly come to pass " (Rev. i. 1).

A new indication of the date of the Revelation, derived from Parthian symbolism, now claims our attention.

The Revelation foretells the overthrow of the Roman power by hostile armies; but Rome, Mistress of the World, was held by all in Nero's reign to be invincible. A symbol of a conquering power threatening Rome was required. It was chosen from Parthia.

For more than a hundred years Parthia and Rome had been at war with varying success. The celebrated defeats of Crassus and Antony had tarnished the honour and glory of the Roman army; and Parthia, in defiance of Rome, had proudly kept flying the banner of the lion in the broad lands beyond the Euphrates.

For many years the struggle had been for the possession of the kingdom of Armenia. In the year 66, when Nero was on the throne, Tiridates, a Parthian of the royal line of Arsacid, came to Rome to receive at the hands of Nero the crown of the kingdom of

Armenia. These were the terms of peace, that the Parthian royal house should obtain the kingdom, but that the King, Tiridates, should come to Rome to receive his crown.

Nero's popularity was at that time on the wane. He made every effort, therefore, to convert this incident into a triumph for himself and for the Roman arms, by surrounding it with all the pageantry and pomp which Rome could furnish. Tiridates was received with great splendour and crowned King of Armenia by Nero, as if it were a Roman festival.

We turn now to the Apocalypse. The action of the book begins at verse two of Chapter vi. where our Lord appears as a conqueror. "And I saw and beheld a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow: and a crown was given to him, and he went forth conquering, that he might conquer."

What is the significance of this symbolism? The bow in those days was just as much a weapon of warfare as the rifle is to-day. The Romans had ceased to use it, but it was the chief weapon of their enemies, the Parthians, who used it, moreover, on horseback. The Parthian army was composed of mounted archers, whose battle tactics are so well known that "a Parthian shaft" has passed into a proverb. White was the sacred colour of the Persians, with whom the Parthians were confounded at Rome. The Roman poets of the Augustan era used the expressions Parthia and Persia indifferently. A sacred white horse accompanied a Persian army. Kings of Persia who led their armies to battle were mounted on white horses. Parthian coins of the years 42-65, just before St John's exile, show the King, Artabanus III. mounted on a horse, with loose flowing trousers. From the absence of shading on the coins the idea is

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conveyed that the King is clothed in white and rides a white horse. The regular reverse type on Parthian coins shows the King deified as Apollo, armed with a bow, as a symbol of military power (Ramsay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 58-61). The Apocalypse makes use of both sides of the coin in this symbolism.

The horseman is identified as our Lord, later in the Apocalypse, when he appears at the head of his forces in final battle. He is "the Word of God" (Rev. xix. 13). Moreover, we are told that "He hath on his garments and on his thigh written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Rev. xix. 16). Now Phraates II. adopted the title of "King of Kings," which came into general use as the title of the Parthian kings from the time of Orodes, 38 B.C. It was the title of the Parthian kings when Tiridates came to Rome. We have seen that St John is credited with missionary work in the neighbourhood of Parthia.

A Greek inscription was found at Bisutun, in which Góterzés, a Parthian monarch who reigned A.D. 41-51, is called Satrap of Satraps, equivalent to Lord of Lords. He was chief Satrap of Parthia, and assumed the title of King of Kings, later on, when he came to the throne. In the prophecy of Ezechiel relating to the destruction of Tyre, on which Chapter xviii. of the Apocalypse, relating to the destruction of Rome, is to some extent modelled, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, the destroyer, is called "King of Kings from the north" (Ezech. xxvi. 7).

To complete the picture, we have, in a sort of parenthesis, "and a crown was given to him," in allusion, as it seems, to the above-mentioned reception of the crown by Tiridates the Arsacid. No other

satisfactory explanation has ever been found for this gift of the crown.

This symbolism of our Lord going forth as a Parthian King, "conquering that he might conquer," conveyed the needed hint that the might of Rome was not as invincible as every one believed it to be in those days. It was a prediction, too, of the Persian wars, which were to play so great a part in the downfall of Rome.

The threat of Parthia is not confined to this opening verse. It appears twice again in the action of the book, under the symbolism of the Euphrates.

In the first or Jewish theme of the Apocalypse there is an episodal reference to the destruction of the Roman Empire. It is introduced in this way: "And the sixth angel sounded the trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before the eyes of God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet: Loose the four angels who are bound in the great river Euphrates" (Rev. x. 13, 14).

Again, in the Roman theme, when angels pour out the vials of God's wrath upon the Roman Empire, we read: "And the sixth angel poured out his vial on the great river Euphrates; and dried up the water thereof, that a way might be prepared for the kings of the rising sun" (Rev. xvi. 12).

The Parthian menace is clearly stamped on both these sentences. It is not by chance that we find the angel of the sixth trumpet, and the angel of the sixth vial, letting loose the Parthian hordes upon the Roman Empire. Everything in the Apocalypse has a design, and the design here is, apparently, to make it plain to the reader that these two verses in different parts of the book relate to the same events.

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It will probably be admitted that this Parthian symbolism throws light both upon the authorship and date of the Apocalypse, especially on the date. The book was written, apparently, when Parthian politics in relation to Rome deeply interested men in all parts of the Roman Empire.

In all the thirty years that elapsed between the time of Tiridates' visit to Rome, and the persecution of Domitian, in 96, and for many years afterwards, peace with Parthia reigned supreme. There was no Parthian question in Domitian's reign. The memory of the Parthian war had been blotted out by a succession of startling events at home and abroad. It is very doubtful whether the Parthian symbolism of the Revelation would have been then understood.

Prof. Ramsay says: " Banished to Patmos, St John was dead to the world. He could not learn much about what was going on in the Empire and in the province of Asia. . . . The Revelation which was composed in the circumstances above described. . . . But its point of view is the moment when the Apostle was snatched from the world and sent into banishment. After that he knew nothing; his living entombment began then " (*op. cit.* pp. 86-89). This would place his banishment in the latter half of the year 66 A.D., for it was in that year that Tiridates came to Rome. It may have been the end of the year 66, for St John seems to have been aware of Nero's triumphal return in the autumn of 66 A.D. from the Olympian games, in which he competed with success. That was the occasion on which he was hailed by the people as a god. We find at Rev. xiii. 6, 8, the beast from the sea, " blasphemed God," " And all that dwell upon the earth adored him," in allusion, apparently, to Nero's permitting himself to be acclaimed as a god. Allowing

sufficient time for him to settle down and find his opportunities at Patmos, it is probable that the Apocalypse was written by St John in the beginning of 67 A.D. Bishop Lightfoot (*Biblical Essays*, p. 52, and *Supernatural Religion*, p. 132) places the date of the Apocalypse at the close of Nero's reign, 68, so also Bishop Westcott and Dr Hort; but then we lose the motive of the book, which was to sustain the Christians during actual persecution. Nero died in June, 68. Persecution at once ceased, and St John was released from Patmos, where the book was written. The one and only argument in favour of dating the Apocalypse in Domitian's reign is that St Irenæus has left on record words (quoted above) which will bear that interpretation. He was not dealing directly with the date of Revelation, but with the "beast" of the Apocalypse, whom he took to be Antichrist; a preoccupation that has filled the minds of men from his day to ours. He assumed, in passing, without argument or comment, that the Apocalypse was seen in Domitian's reign. Doubtless he believed it, and for reasons that will be given in the next Essay it was probably the tradition of his time, the middle of the second century. His reference to the subject was purely incidental and not intended to be dogmatic. He wrote of when the book was seen, not of the date of its writing.

II

When and How the Key was Lost

IT is admitted that the Apocalypse was written during a period of persecution. St John, the writer, tells us so distinctly. He says: "I, John, your brother and sharer in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience in Jesus Christ, was in the island which is called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. i. 9).

He conveys to us, not only that he was then suffering persecution at Patmos for preaching the Gospel of Christ, but that he shared with others, not in Patmos, "in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience in Jesus Christ." And to these others he sent the Revelation. It is very important for us to find out who they were.

We read in the opening sentence "The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him, to make known to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass, and signified sending by his angel to his servant John." In this passage servants are mentioned twice. The Revelation is made known to the servants of God, and St John is himself called a servant. Therefore, they were such as he was. Towards the close of the book we read: "And the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel to show his servants the things which must be done shortly" (Rev. xxii.^f6). Here, again, we are told that an angel is sent to show the Revelation to the servants of God. It seems that we must draw a distinction between

an angel and a servant. Angels are very frequently mentioned in the Apocalypse, generally in an executive capacity. They are mentioned so often, fifty-eight times, that even selected quotations would take up too much space. In all cases, however, they represent spiritual beings except in the case of the Angels of the Seven Churches of Asia. Our Lord orders St John to write to the Angels of these Churches and dictates the letters Himself. "To the Angel of the Church of Ephesus write" (Rev. ii. 1). These are symbolical angels, bishops of the highest rank in the Church. For this reason, amongst others, the Seven Churches of Asia and their Angels are treated symbolically in the last essay of this series.

We must look to St John for guidance as to the servants of God into whose hands the Apocalypse was delivered. He addresses them as "your brother and sharer in tribulation." This "tribulation" is a reference to past persecution.

The Book of Revelation had to be placed in the safe hands of living custodians in whom St John could trust. He sent the book to brethren who had shared with him in previous persecutions and missionary work. Previous to Nero there was only persecution from the Jews. This was directed mainly, if not entirely, against the Hebrew leaders of the Christian flock, who were converts to the faith. These men, "the elect and chosen of their race," spread the light of Christianity from Jerusalem to the world around. Their first care was to convert their own brethren of the Synagogue, both at Jerusalem and in the cities of the Gentiles. The Jews hated them with a fierce, bigoted hatred, as recusant brethren, false to the traditions of Israel, and enemies of their own household. They maltreated them when and where

they had power to do so. In Jerusalem the Apostles were beaten, and some of them put to death. We know from the Acts of the Apostles that the Jews were constantly accusing their Christian fellow-countrymen before the Roman magistrates, and stirring up the mob against them. St John himself had suffered these tribulations. He addresses living brethren of the Church who had been in like tribulations. They were Hebrew converts from Judaism, who had shared with him, also, in "the kingdom and patience." Some of them, possibly, were his own disciples who followed him to Ephesus. SS. Peter and Paul had faithful companions who shared in their troubles and triumphs. Why not St John? And to whom would he turn in his exile at Patmos but to these faithful few upon whom he could rely with certainty and who were domiciled at Ephesus, to which place he sent his book?

Again, he says, "I, John, your brother." This expression connotes men of the Hebrew race. There are many examples of this usage in the New Testament. In the Acts of the Apostles we find that when St Paul went about the cities of the Gentiles he met many colonies of Jews. These men he addressed always as brethren, and they reciprocated this Hebrew custom. Not so the Gentiles. They were not addressed as brethren.

The rulers of the Synagogue at Antioch sent to Paul and Barnabas, saying, "Ye men and brethren." And Paul addressing them said, "Men, brethren, children of the stock of Abraham" (Acts xiii. 15-26).

Again, "As the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the ancients, from whom also receiving letters to the brethren, I went to Damascus" (Acts xxii. 5). St Paul here refers to the Synagogue as "the

brethren," for we read in the Acts, previously, St Paul "went to the high priest, and asked him letters to Damascus to the Synagogue" (Acts ix. 2).

St Paul, we know, was a Hebrew proud of his race. But St John was in a like position. He was a Hebrew of good descent. He had some connection with the high priest, Annas (John xviii. 15-16). The Apocalypse shows him to have been intimately versed in the Scriptures. There is no reason to doubt that he uses the expression, "brethren," in the same sense as St Paul does.

John, as a servant of God, we know. He is our exemplar of the servants the book was sent to. They were servants of God, sharers in St John's trials and triumphs, Hebrew brethren, and prophets in the sense in which the word was then used. To put it in another way, the Apocalypse was sent to the surviving Apostles and disciples in the year 67. They were the Hebrew leaders of the principal Christian Churches. Some of them were disciples of St John at Ephesus. The book was sent in the first place to them "to make known to them the things which must shortly come to pass."

When our Lord rose from the dead, "He was seen by Cephas, and after that by the eleven. Then was he seen by more than five hundred brethren at once, of whom many remain until this present, and some are fallen asleep" (Cor. xv. 5-6).

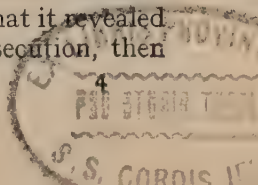
This was written about the year 56. Many of "the brethren" were then alive. In the year 67, when St John wrote the Apocalypse, there would be some living still. About the year 62 St Paul wrote from Rome to the Colossians, sending his Epistle by Tychicus. At the end of this epistle he sends salutations from Epaphras, "Luke, the most dear physi-

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cian," and " Demas," and tells them to " Salute the brethren who are at Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the Church that is in his house." St Paul, at the end of his Epistle to the Romans, chiefly addressed to his fellow-countrymen there, sends his salutations to a long list of his friends and kinsmen at Rome who were Christians.

All that we need postulate here is that one or more of the original Hebrew disciples were to be found in the principal Churches, such as Jerusalem, Rome, Antioch, and especially at Jerusalem and Ephesus in the year 67. These men would be the natural leaders of the Christian Church in those early days. They were converts from Judaism, brought up in the study of the Holy Scriptures. The language and symbolism of the Old Testament had saturated their minds. The prophecies of Daniel, Ezechiel, and Jeremias, and the figurative language in which they were clothed, were familiar to them. They were well acquainted with gematria, or the language of numbers, and accustomed to the practice of translating numbers into names. Withal, the brethren at Ephesus were able to read Greek and think in Hebrew at the same time. Greek was the *lingua franca* of the East in those days and the current tongue of Ephesus.

We must now consider the nature of the document which was addressed to them. The Apocalypse in recent years has yielded up most of its secrets to scholars who have, with great learning and patience, collated its Hebrew translations with its Greek text, and these with the key references to the Old Testament contained in them. For it is now recognised that the book was conceived in Hebrew and written in Greek. The result has been to show that it revealed to the leaders of the Church that persecution, then



rife, would soon cease; that retribution would fall upon both Jew and pagan; that idolatrous Rome would come to great grief; and that Christians must suffer and die rather than sacrifice to the imperial gods. Great rewards were promised to the martyrs, great punishments to those "fearful" (Rev. xxi. 8) who fell away. There are also references to a Millennium and to the New Jerusalem. The main theme of the book was prefaced by an inspired Christology, and by letters to Seven Churches of Asia. The whole book forms a Revelation of surpassing interest to St John's brethren, to us, and to all time.

But, as is beginning to be recognised now, from its very nature it was a document of a highly political and secret character. To get some idea of its critical position in this respect, we will suppose a modern instance of a somewhat similar kind. Suppose that when the French Government expelled Mgr Montagnini, the Pope's Nuncio, without notice, from Paris, in December, 1906, and seized upon the Papal Archives, they found a document in cipher, which, when decoded, purported to be a Revelation from God given to the Pope, and sent by him to Mgr Montagnini, showing that the French Republic would speedily perish, that France would be invaded and conquered by foreign kings, that its presidents and high priests of Freemasonry would be cast down to hell, and that Paris would be completely destroyed! What an outcry there would be in the yellow press of Europe! What a stimulus of persecution in France!

But precisely all this, and much more, is found in the Revelation of St John with reference to the Imperial Line, and Rome, Mistress of the World! This is not a matter of personal exegesis. It is admitted now by the most eminent scholars that chapters xiii.

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to xix. of the Apocalypse, inclusive, deal with Rome. First we have a "beast" "coming out of the sea," "having seven heads and ten horns." The beast is the Empire, the heads are Emperors. "And upon his head names of blasphemy." "And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God." "And all that dwell upon the earth adored him." "He that shall lead into captivity shall go into captivity, he that shall kill by the sword must be killed by the sword." All this relates to the Emperor. Then we have "another beast coming up out of the earth." This beast represents the Roman pagan hierarchy. "And he caused the earth and them that dwell therein, to adore the first beast." This is with reference to Cæsar worship then prevalent. "If any man shall adore the beast or his image . . . he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the sight of the holy angels and in the sight of the Lamb." "And the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever." "And the winepress was trodden without the City, and blood came out of the winepress, even up to horses' bridles, for a thousand and six hundred furlongs." This blood is a measure of God's vengeance upon Rome. Then we have "the seven vials of the wrath of God poured upon the earth" (*εἰς τὴν γῆν*), which means the pagan Empire of Rome. The first vial caused "a sore and most grievous wound upon the men who had the mark of the beast, and upon them who adored his image." The second vial was poured "into the sea, and it became as the blood of a dead man, and every living soul died in the sea." "And the third poured out his vial upon the rivers and the fountains of waters, and they became blood." "And the fourth poured out his vial upon the sun, and it was given to him to afflict men with heat and fire,

and men were scorched with great heat." "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast, and his kingdom became dark, and they gnawed their tongues for pain." "And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon that great river Euphrates, and dried up the water thereof, that a way might be prepared for the kings from the rising sun." This is the Parthian menace. "And the great city was made into three parts, and the cities of the Gentiles fell, and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the indignation of his wrath." The great Babylon was a well-known symbol of the city of Rome, and this leads on to a picture of the desolation of Rome. "And on her forehead a name was written: A mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of the fornications and abominations of the earth." "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings." "And the ten horns which thou sawest on the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and shall burn her with fire." Here Rome is pictured as a harlot. "And as much as she hath glorified herself, and hath been in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give unto her, because she saith in her heart: I sit as a queen and am not a widow, and sorrow I shall not see." "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine, and she shall be burnt with fire, because God is strong, who shall judge her." "And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication, and lived in delicacies with her, shall weep and bewail themselves over her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning. Standing afar off for fear of her torments, saying: Woe, woe! that great city Babylon, that mighty city, for in one hour is thy

judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her, for no man shall buy their merchandise any more." "And every ship-master, and every one that sails into the lake, and mariners and they that work at sea stood afar off, and cried out seeing the place of her burning, saying: What city is like to this great city?" The lake was the Mediterranean Sea. *In medias terras*. "And a mighty angel took up a stone, as it were a great mill-stone, and cast it into the sea, saying: With this violence shall Babylon, that great city, be thrown down, and shall now be found no more. And the voice of harpers, and of musicians, and of them that play on the pipe and on the trumpet, shall no more be heard in thee, and the sound of a mill shall no more be heard in thee." "And the light of the lamp shall shine no more in thee, and the voice of the bridegroom and bride shall be heard no more in thee." "And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that did fly through the midst of heaven: Come and gather yourselves together to the great supper of God, that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of tribunes and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all freemen and bondsmen, and of little and great." Tribunes were the military authorities of Rome. "And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together, to make war with him that sat upon the horse, and with his army." The "kings of the earth," τῆς γῆς, are the allies of Rome. "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet, who wrought signs before him, wherewith he seduced them, who received the mark of the beast, and who adored his image. These two were cast alive into the

pool of fire burning with brimstone." The false prophet is another name for the hierarchy of idolatrous Rome. "And the rest were slain by the sword of him that sitteth upon the horse, which proceedeth out of his mouth, and all the birds were filled with their flesh." "Him that sitteth upon the horse" is our Lord, who in the beginning (Rev. vi. 2) "went forth conquering that he might conquer." The Hebrews considered it a great degradation to leave their dead unburied. To complete the picture of Rome's fall, the bodies of the Romans are dishonoured, after death, by being eaten by vultures.

The allusions to the City of Rome are rather pointed, notwithstanding the cipher. There was no other city in the world which would involve kings and merchants and sea-captains in her ruin; but an angel explains: "Come, I will show thee the condemnation of the great harlot, who sitteth upon many waters" (Rev. xvii. 1). "And the woman which thou sawest is the great city, a kingdom which hath dominion over the kings of the earth" (Rev. xvii. 18). Rome had dominion over the kings of the earth. The seven heads are seven mountains upon which the woman sitteth (Rev. xvii. 9). Rome was known as the seven-hilled city. "And he said to me: The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and nations, and tongues" (Rev. xvii. 15). Rome was the only city which had power over peoples and nations and tongues, and sat upon and oppressed them.

To give life and actuality to the situation in St John's time, we will consider the Apocalypse again in the light of the recent Montagnini persecution. Suppose that Mgr Montagnini had a document of this kind, predicting all these dire evils for the French Presidents, the Grand Masters and Vene-

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rables of the Lodges of Freemasonry, for all France, and for Paris itself. No one will deny that this would be a political document of a very dangerous and compromising character. What would he do with it? Without a doubt he would hide it very carefully, taking every possible precaution that it should not fall into the hands of the "Lodges." If such a document was seized, even under the circumstances, disgraceful to France, of his expulsion from Paris, he would be held inexcusable. Consequently he would be extremely reticent about it, showing it only to the Archbishop of Paris, and perhaps one or two other bishops whose needs required it, and who he was sure he could trust.

The leaders of the Christian Church, to whose care the Apocalypse was entrusted, in the year 67, would certainly act in like manner. They would carefully conceal the book or papyrus roll, and communicate its political contents to none of their inferiors. They had stronger reasons for reticence and concealment than Mgr Montagnini would have had. The progress of the infant Church of Christ would seem to depend upon their prudence.

For many years the Apostles and disciples had gone about the Roman world, practically unmolested by the authorities, save for Jewish interference, preaching a Gospel absolutely at variance with the established religion of the Empire. They were protected by their apparent insignificance. In the year 64 the fire at Rome had precipitated the conflict between paganism and Christianity. Nero strove with fierce determination to wipe out Christianity from his capital. For two years he had carried out a relentless persecution at Rome; then the Apocalypse appeared. To allow its contents to leak out in the

provinces would cause the conflagration of persecution to spread all over the Empire. It was not a question of the expulsion of priests and nuns, and the plunder of their property, as in France; it was a question, apparently, of life and death, not of individuals, but of Christianity itself. The contest was most uneven. On one side was the greatest power the world had ever seen, a power identified with idolatry, whose national religion was the worship of its emperors, whose emperors were its supreme pontiffs and gods. On the other were the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, who died upon the cross, poor and needy in this world's goods, strong only in faith and the grace of God. SS. Peter and Paul, the great leaders of the Church, had been put to death. Cruelty exhausted itself in the torture of men, women and children of the Christian faith. The arena of Rome ran red with Christian blood. Rome was in no humour to be told that its emperors were beasts destined to the eternal fires and that the Imperial City was reserved for fire and torment and destruction. Neither would the Asiarchs of Asia Minor have relished the idea of being called beasts, destined to be "cast alive into the pool of fire burning with brimstone" (Rev. xix. 20).

Extraordinary precautions had to be taken to convey the message of Revelation to the suffering Churches in such a way that the significance of its political passages should not be discovered. St John's position as an exile at Patmos was so cramped and the difficulties surrounding him so great, that this must have been a very serious problem.

Mommsen says: "Banishment, combined with hard labour for life, was one of the graver penalties. Many Christians were punished in that way. It was a penalty

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for humble criminals, provincials and slaves. It was, in its worst form, a terrible fate. Like the death penalty it was preceded by scourging, and it was marked by perpetual fetters, scanty clothing, insufficient food, sleep on the bare ground in a dark prison, and work under the lash of military overseers. . . . Undoubtedly, there were many forms of hard labour under the Roman rule, and these varied in degree, some being worse than others" (*Romishes Shafricht*). It seems almost in vain to hope that St John escaped the severer form of exile. If poverty and humility merited the worst treatment, he had those qualifications. Those were rough times; the mere accusation of the Synagogue brought down stripes and imprisonment on the Apostles. However, there were varying degrees of banishment, and St John's position may not have been so hard as here supposed.

He was, at any rate, transported to Patmos as a criminal, and though there may have been no prison buildings then, there were guards. How was he to obtain papyrus prepared for writing, to write his account of his visions, keep the book from being confiscated, and send it to his disciples at Ephesus? The problem of concealment began with the first line of the Apocalypse. Gradually it formed rather a bulky papyrus roll which could not easily be concealed.

This papyrus and his labours upon it must, one would suppose, have attracted the attention and curiosity of his guards. Under no system of prison discipline, as understood even at the present time, could this writing be allowed to pass without investigation. Hence the need for a Hebrew cipher for the use of "the brethren," who were learned converts

from Judaism, the Hebrew leaders of the Christian Church, to whom the book was sent.

It seems impossible that he could have written and dispatched the Apocalypse without the Divine assistance. He was an Apostle, "the beloved" of our Lord. He would not lack the miraculous aid which God had given to other Apostles in their hour of need. It seems probable that the tribune in charge, and some of St John's guards and fellow-prisoners, were converted to Christianity. Such things we know happened in Apostolic times. Assuming this timely aid, the frequent passage of ships from the safe harbour of Patmos to the town of Ephesus, the nearest landing-place of the East, would facilitate the transmission of the book. Changing guards, and the release of prisoners from exile, would afford the opportunity.

But the "safe conduct" of the Apocalypse would hardly extend beyond the shores of Patmos. It was liable to inspection at any time *en route* until it reached the safe hands of its ultimate custodians at such distant parts of the Empire as Rome and Jerusalem. Hence some textual form of concealment was necessary. The real meaning of the Roman theme of the Apocalypse was concealed by St John—in all that part of it which might be described as political—in a Hebraic cipher, taken chiefly from the symbolism of the Old Testament. The extent to which Old Testament influences enter into the construction of the Apocalypse may be gauged from the fact that Westcott and Hort, who made a special investigation of this point, found 278 references to the Jewish Scriptures in the 404 verses of the Apocalypse. This shows that the Jewish Scriptures form the key to about seventy per cent of the Apocalyptic verses. Dr Swete says: "The writer of the New Testament Apocalypse

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has made large use of the Apocalyptic portions of the Old Testament. He refers to the Book of Daniel in some forty-five places . . . and the Books of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah are used with almost equal frequency, while the other Prophets, the Psalter and the Pentateuch are often in view. No book in the New Testament is so thoroughly steeped in the thought and imagery of the Hebrew Scriptures" (*The Apocalypse*, LIII. and LXXXIX.).

As an additional precaution, perhaps, the book is prefaced by letters to Ephesus and other Churches of Asia, which were in St John's charge, which letters are comparatively free from symbolism. These letters deal entirely with the religious condition of those Churches. They would be read first, and any one ignorant of the cipher would form his opinion of the book from its preface. The book was intended for the Christians suffering persecution at Rome, and also for those Hebrew Christians who were involved in the threatened destruction of Jerusalem. Rome was at war with Christianity, and Jerusalem was at war with Rome. It would have been impossible for St John to send the book direct to those places, and very dangerous to let it be known that it was intended for them. Hence it is addressed, ostensibly, to Seven Churches which were in St John's charge and which were then in the enjoyment of peace. And it was sent, in the first place, to St John's own Church at Ephesus.

There were colonies of Jews at this time in all the great cities of Asia Minor. These men were Greek in speech, but Hebrew in thought, and learned in the Old Testament Scriptures. If the Apocalypse fell into their hands, they would be able to decipher it, and it would furnish them with a deadly weapon against

their Christian fellow-countrymen. They would bring accusations of high treason against St John and all those in any way connected with copying and distributing the book. There were grave perils surrounding the publication of the Apocalypse on all sides.

We know now that the book was successfully conveyed from Patmos to Ephesus, that it was delivered into the hands of the Hebrew leaders of the Churches, that its message was understood by them, and that many copies of it were made and distributed. In due time the book reached Jerusalem and Rome, and revealed its secrets to those in authority there. It appears from Justin and from the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which reproduces its symbolism, that it was known at Rome before the end of the first century. Caius, a Roman Presbyter, early in the second century, refers to it. The "brethren" to whom the book was sent would see clearly that it was not intended for publication. They would draw upon it for messages of consolation, hope and warning to the Christian flock suffering persecution, but they would not reveal the key to the cipher which clothed the Roman debacle. They would guard it especially from the eyes of the Synagogue; which means, probably, that they never let the book pass out of their own hands and concealed it jealously from the eyes of all those who could understand it. In the meanwhile, events were marching fast in the direction predicted by the Apocalypse. On June 9, A.D. 68, the tyrant Nero died by the sword, hated and despised. His persecuting edicts were at once repealed by the Senate. St John was liberated from Patmos and returned to Ephesus. The whole Christian world resumed in peace its religious observances and teaching. The main reason why the book was given to the

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Church no longer existed. There was no occasion to draw upon it for consolation for the persecuted Church. It ceased to be of immediate interest to the Christian world. On the other hand, it remained a dangerous political document of the highest interest and importance. It showed in what direction current political events were hurrying Rome. The brief but bloody struggles of Galba, Otho and Vitellus to seize the imperial crown illustrated its teaching and confirmed its truth and value, and the fall of Jerusalem established its prophetic character.

The minds of the "brethren," whose natural instincts were always intensely Hebrew, would be absorbed in the study of those passages relating to the destruction of Jerusalem. That awful drama, so long expected, which the Prophets had foretold, was then actually in progress, and hastening to an end. In the year 67 the land of Judea was swept by the legions of Vespasian. The Christians retired to Pella. When Vespasian was called to the throne, at the end of the year 69, his son, Titus, collected the legions of Rome and camped them around the doomed walls of Jerusalem. How many warnings of the Old and New Testaments and of Revelation were being visibly fulfilled? Astonishment and sorrow would blend in the minds of the "brethren" with recognition of the predictions and of the Justice of God. They had not very long to wait. In August of the year 70 the end came, "the days of vengeance that all things may be fulfilled that are written" (Luke xxi.).

There was a very great concourse of Jews at Jerusalem on the Feast of the Passover in the year 67. The richer and better educated class of Jews, who could afford the journey, flocked to Jerusalem from

all parts of the world, little dreaming that they were assisting at the fulfilment of the catastrophe predicted for their metropolis and race. It is computed that at the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem there were three million Jews cooped within its walls. For three years war, famine and pestilence took their daily toll of lives from the unfortunate inhabitants. Josephus estimated that 1,100,000 perished in Jerusalem. When the city was captured and the Temple destroyed, the miserable survivors were dispersed into slavery. Some of the captives were taken to Rome for the triumphal fêtes, and beasts of the arena; but the greater part were sold as slaves at the price of cattle, for there were so many Jewish slaves that they glutted the market.

This must have been for a time an annihilating blow to the Jewish race throughout the world. The Hebrew leaders of the Christian Church, we may be sure, felt the destruction of their ancient Temple and capital and the disgrace and decimation of their race so deeply that they would not bare their hearts, and point the moral, from the book of Revelation, to their Gentile followers; especially as the Gentile Christians felt no sympathy for the Jews as a body, but looked upon their sufferings as the just punishment for their crime in crucifying our Lord.

Altogether apart from state secrecy and racial preoccupations there were great, if not insuperable, difficulties in the way of explaining the Apocalypse. The men of the first century could not understand events which were to happen four centuries after their time. Looking back, we can trace the political changes which completely transformed the Roman world and culminated in the fall of Rome. But Rome was a solid and imperishable fact in the first

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century of the Christian era. Moreover, even her Christian subjects were touched with the pride of Empire and felt the honour of the *Civis Romanus sum*.

On many of the most important points of the political drama of the Apocalypse the Christian leaders themselves were uninformed. Supposing that the predictions as to the fall of Rome and of the Empire became known to the Christians generally, what excitement there would be! What contentions as to who and where were the ten kings, and when they would come! What questioning of the Hebrew custodians of the book! But even the "brethren" could not know anything about the kingdoms of the Goths, Visigoths, Huns, Vandals, and others yet unborn. All sorts of speculation would ensue, and spread in time to the women-folk, always keenly interested in the mysterious. The political matter would leak out of the Christian fold and come to the ears of the Roman magistracy. Then there would be an official inquiry, with unfortunate results to the Christian Church. On all grounds the Roman theme of the Apocalypse was to be avoided by the leaders and teachers of the early Church in their public debates. Even St John, the medium of the Divine Revelation, seems to have refrained from explaining it to his followers. St Polycarp carefully avoided this subject, as we gather from the want of knowledge of his "listener," St Irenæus.

But the Hebrew element in the Christian Church was destined to speedy extinction. The old-time leaders, the survivors of the five hundred, to whom St Paul alluded in the year 54, "of whom many remain until this present," were rapidly dying out, and their places were being taken by Greek- or Latin-speaking converts from the Gentiles. The same may

be said of the disciples and followers of the Apostles. In the interval between the year 67, when the Apocalypse was written, and the year 96, when it appeared in public, "the brethren" gradually dwindled and disappeared, save for one great figure, St John himself, who was then tottering to his grave. The Nazarene Church retained its nationality for some years longer, but it was isolated by the circumstances of time and place, and especially by its adherence to Jewish customs. At any rate, the political aspect of the Apocalypse would be kept in the background at Jerusalem as elsewhere. The Nazarene Church, which returned from Pella to Jerusalem, appears to have been involved in the final destruction of Jerusalem and slaughter and banishment of the Jews, which took place in the wars of Trajan and Hadrian. Eusebius says of Hadrian's war with the Jews: "Since this event we have shown that the Church there consisted of Gentiles, after those of the circumcision, and that Marcus was the first Bishop of the Gentiles that presided there" (*Hist. Eccl.* v. 12). This was in the year 134 A.D.

For thirty years subsequent to the year 67, from the persecution of Nero to that of Domitian, the Apocalypse lay practically dormant. There was no occasion to use it, and its publication was most inadvisable. But when persecution once more troubled the Church in the year 96, its leaders of Gentile stock turned to their concealed treasure of Revelation for guidance, and found what they wanted. It was a tower of strength to the Church in the Domitian persecution. But they also found passages that they did not understand. They read the Greek of the Apocalypse with Greek spectacles, so to speak; but the chief political passages in the Greek text would

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not yield up their meaning to Greek thought. The key to the cipher of the Apocalypse was lost!

If we consider the mind of the Church at this early period, when the Apostles and their followers, its Hebrew element, had just disappeared, we will find it in a state of marked opposition and antipathy to Judaism, as well as to paganism. Christianity was a turning away from Judaism and the Old Law. And this aspect of the Christian religion was accentuated by constant persecution on the part of the Jews.

The Christian bishops of this period were Gentiles, Greeks and Romans, aliens to Hebrew thought, opposed to Judaism, who looked upon the Jewish race as accursed for their judicial murder of our Lord. So far from studying the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament, it is probable that they would have avoided them if they knew how to read them. But they could not read Hebrew or Aramaic, and Greek copies of the Hebrew Scriptures were few and far between at that time. They read the Apocalypse as a Greek message to the Greek Christians of Asia Minor. The Hebrew thought animating the Roman theme they failed to understand. When Domitian's persecution broke out, they produced their copies of the Apocalypse from hiding-places, and had them copied and distributed to the larger Church of their time. The Apocalypse was seen for the first time, publicly, in the hands of the leaders of the Church.

We now appreciate better the expression used by St Irenæus: "For it has not been long since it was seen, but almost in our own generation, about the end of Domitian's reign" (*con. Hæres.* v. 30). He probably meant the book. We speak of the book as the Apocalypse, and he wrote of it in the same way.

When he wrote about the year 185-190, there was, probably, a long-standing tradition that the Apocalypse was seen about the end of Domitian's reign.

The testimony of St Irenæus and others, whether direct or indirect, that the book was seen, and was not understood, at the close of Domitian's reign is very strong proof that it was not written then, but in the earlier persecution of Nero.

There is plenty of evidence that the Apocalypse was not understood in the year 96. False opinions were held and taught about it even during St John's lifetime, Cerinthus is said by Caius, the Roman Presbyter, to have asserted that a thousand years would be spent with Christ upon earth in marriage feasting (Euseb. III. 28).

St Polycarp testified that St John went into a bath at Ephesus, and, seeing Cerinthus within, ran out without bathing, and exclaimed: "Let us flee, lest the bath should fall in, as long as Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, is within" (Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.* IV. 14).

Cerinthus was a heretic who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, and that was the reason why St John fled the bath. If Polycarp, who was born in the year 69, witnessed this incident, it took place long after St John's return to Ephesus, and long after the Revelation was made in the year 67. Hence, it would have afforded a good opportunity of explaining the millennium, which Cerinthus had notoriously falsified. But St John apparently said nothing about it publicly, for we find such early writers as Papias and St Irenæus touched with the false doctrine of millenarianism.*

* If it could be shown that Cerinthus knew of the existence of the Apocalypse at this time, it would follow that it was written before A.D. 96. St John was too old then to frequent public baths, or flee them.

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St Polycarp, as a young man, was a follower of St John. He was subsequently made bishop of Smyrna, one of the Seven Churches of Asia. St Irenæus, afterwards Bishop of Lyons, was in his youth a follower of Polycarp, and he says that he remembered his discourses well. He says he remembers "his familiar discourses with John, as he was accustomed to tell, as also his familiarity with those that had seen the Lord. How also he used to relate their discourses, and what things he had heard from them concerning the Lord" (Euseb. v. 20). These three men, St Polycarp, Papias and St Irenæus, place us in the midst of the Seven Churches of Asia, soon after the Revelation *was seen*, at the end of Domitian's reign. And we know that neither Papias nor St Irenæus understood it. Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, close to Laodicea, was a follower of the followers of the Apostles, who made it his business to collect their traditions. He was a millenarian. Eusebius tells us that Papias "was the cause why most of the ecclesiastical writers, *urging the antiquity of the man*,* were carried away by a similar opinion" (*Hist.* iii. 39).

Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria (247 A.D.) tells us that some of the writers before his time looked upon the Revelation as "covered with a dense and thick veil of ignorance," without sense and without reason." He says of it himself, "I do not reject, but I wonder the more that I cannot comprehend" (Euseb. vii. 25).

This state of things dates from the days of Papias, certainly, and probably from the persecution of Domitian. It might be supposed from the foregoing that there was a possibility of the Revelation having failed to convey its meaning to its original inter-

* The italics are ours.

preters, "the brethren." But St Irenæus has handed down to us a very precious piece of evidence that this was not the case. He tells us in his book *Against Heresies* that the number of the beast found in the older and more accurate copies of the Apocalypse was 666, but in some of them he found the number 616 (v. 29-30). From this we know that the ancient copyists at Ephesus had Nero in their minds as the beast of the Apocalypse. These two numbers spell Nero in Hebrew letters, the first according to its Greek, the second according to its Latin pronunciation. The Greeks and Romans used letters as numerals. The Hebrews of that period used Hebrew letters as numerals also, and were addicted to a form of literary puzzle founded on this principle. It may be illustrated by the custom of English publishers of the last century, who dated their books by means of letters. Thus, M.D.C.C.C.XLVI. stood for 1846; conversely 1846 would stand for M.D.C.C.C.XLVI. So 666 and 616 both stood in Hebrew letters for Nero Cæsar, according as it was worded in Greek or Latin. But the name of Nero was the key to the whole Roman theme. If the "brethren" knew that name, they would understand the rest. The book of Revelation lays particular stress upon the computation of the number of the beast, as if drawing attention to it as the key of the Hebraic cipher. It says: "Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding let him compute the number of the beast. For it is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred sixty-six" (Rev. xiii. 18). There is a kind of emphasis and underlining here not found elsewhere in the book. The readers had this further clue, that the man represented the Roman Empire, since he referred back to Daniel's fourth

beast, and they had the assurance of the angel who explains the symbols in chapter xvii. that the seven heads of the beast are seven kings. All this points to the reigning Emperor Nero, as representing the line of the Cæsars.

St Irenæus, we have seen, made the following comment on the number of the beast: "We, therefore, do not venture to affirm anything with certainty respecting the name of Antichrist. For were it necessary that his name should be clearly announced to the present age, it would have been declared by him who saw the Revelation."

This comment goes further than the point at issue, his want of knowledge of the Revelation. It shows a concept of Antichrist in his mind at variance with the teaching of St John and of his follower St Polycarp. St Irenæus evidently followed the ancient Hebraic tradition that Antichrist would appear upon the earth as a monster of iniquity. But St John, in his Epistles, taught that Antichrist was a movement rather than a man. He says, "Little children, it is the last hour: and as you have heard that Antichrist cometh, even now there are many Antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last hour" (1 John ii. 18). Again, "And every spirit that dissolveth Jesus, is not of God: and this is Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he cometh, and he is now already in the world" (1 John iv. 3).

St John in these two passages alludes to the Jewish anthropomorphic tradition of Antichrist of his time, and explains it away.

St Polycarp, in his Epistle to the Philippians, wrote: "Every one who hath not confessed that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is Antichrist"; thus distinctly

adhering to St John's teaching, that Antichrist is not a special individual.

St John's Epistles were published before the Revelation. That St Polycarp, who became St John's follower after the Revelation, followed the same teaching seems to show that it was not in any way affected by the Revelation. There is nothing about Antichrist in the Apocalypse. But we learn from St Irenæus that in his time, as in our day, the two things were so mixed up together in the minds of men that it was hardly possible to speak of one without alluding to the other.

From which it appears that St Polycarp knew that the number of the beast in the Revelation did not refer to a personal Antichrist, and that he did not make this the subject of his public discourses in the hearing of St Irenæus. And this, again, is evidence of the great reticence with which the whole subject of the Revelation was shrouded by the "brethren" and their followers in the first century.

III

The Second Beast, called "the False Prophet"

AN able review of my book on *The Apocalypse* ends as follows: "By general consent, the Beast from the Sea is the Imperial Government. But what is the Beast from the Land? Here we are quite unable to understand the solution advanced by Mr Elar" (*Irish Times*, March 2, 1906). The solution referred to is that the Beast from the Land means the pagan priesthood.

It is a great thing gained if we have a fixed point, or datum, to work from, in the study of a symbolical book like the Apocalypse. That fixed point we have in the interpretation of the "Beast from the Sea" as the Roman Empire. In the book above referred to the accepted arguments in favour of considering the Beast as Nero, and Nero as a type of the Roman Emperors, have been gathered together from various sources. Taking all that for granted here, we can contrast the second "Beast from the Earth," with the first "Beast from the Sea," or the line of the Cæsars, and it will be very helpful to us in elucidating the meaning of the second Beast.

The Roman theme of the Apocalypse, beginning at chapter xii. and ending at chapter xix., describes the contest between the forces of idolatry and Christianity, and predicts the triumph of Christianity over the devil and his allies. The devil and his

allies are introduced to us at the beginning of this theme as the dragon, the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth. They pervade the theme; which ends with a long description of the ruin of imperial Rome, and the final overthrow of the dragon and his allies. And then we are told that the two beasts are cast into hell together, and the dragon tied up for a thousand years.

The first beast came out of the sea, that is, he was sprung from the people. The "sea of life" is a common metaphor in the Bible. It is used elsewhere in the Apocalypse (Rev. viii. 8; xii. 18; xvi. 3; xxi. 1).

Isaias says: "The wicked are like the raging sea which cannot rest, and the waves thereof cast up dirt and mire" (lvii. 20). Nero was the last of the Julian line. After him Galba, Otho, Vitellus, Vespasian, and most of the succeeding emperors were successful generals of the Roman legions, risen from the ranks and acclaimed to the purple by their followers. Imperators "cast up" from the troubled sea of life, the pagan Roman people.

The second Beast came out of the earth, ἐκ τῆς γῆς. The same Greek expression is used for those who adored the Beast from the Sea at Rev. xiii. 8: "And all that dwell upon the earth (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) adored him." This earth is the pagan world. The second Beast rose from those who adored the first beast, Cæsar. We shall find presently that it was part of its duty to make others join in Cæsar worship. This would identify the "Beast from the Earth" with the pagan priesthood. Assuming for the moment that this is correct, let us contrast the position of the pagan priesthood with that of the Emperors. We will find that the priesthood sprang from the aristocracy of Rome, from the highest ranks of the pagan world.

Gibbon says: "The ministers of polytheism, both in Rome and in the provinces, were, for the most part, men of noble birth and of affluent fortune, who received as an honourable distinction the care of a celebrated temple, or of a public sacrifice; exhibited very frequently at their own expense the sacred games . . . and whilst they acknowledged the supreme jurisdiction of the Senate, of the College of Pontiffs, and of the Emperor, these civil magistrates contented themselves with the easy task of maintaining in peace and dignity the general worship of mankind" (*Decline and Fall*, c. xv.).

"The office of supreme pontiff, which from the time of Numa to that of Augustus had always been exercised by one of the most eminent of the senators, was at length united to the imperial dignity" (*Decline and Fall*, c. xx.).

The first beast had ten horns. The second beast "had two horns, like to a lamb."

The key to the Apocalypse is found in the connection between its symbolism and that of the Old Testament. The beast with ten horns was the figure employed by the Prophet Daniel to denote "the fourth Kingdom," or Roman Empire. It is used for the same purpose by St John in the Apocalypse.

Considering that the Jews were of old a shepherd people, it is very natural that the Prophet Daniel should use a figurative, all-powerful ram, as the symbol of the fourth or conquering kingdom (Dan. vii.). Sheep in ancient days were multihorned. Eight-horned sheep were not uncommon. A ram with an extra pair of horns would stand as a symbol of great strength. Horns were used in the Old Testament as symbols of power. In Daniel viii. the wars of the Medes and Persians with the Greek dynas-

ties are represented by a ram and he-goat in conflict.

The first and the second beast belong to the same species, and are contrasted in the book, as the ten-horned ram and the two-horned lamb.

“ And I saw a beast coming out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns ” (Rev. xiii. 1).

“ And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns, like to a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon ” (Rev. xiii. 11).

It was the peculiarity of lambs of multihorned sheep that they had only two small horns. Such sheep and lambs still exist; though modern sheep have seldom more than two pairs of horns.

As the first beast and the second beast are symbols chosen from the same species, we may suppose that they represent types which are also similar. But the first beast, it is allowed, represents not an individual but the imperial power. We may, therefore, safely infer that the second beast is not put for an individual, but for a similar kind of power to that of the Roman Emperors, but of inferior strength. The relationship of these two powers is symbolised by the relation which exists between the ram and the lamb. The ram is the lord of the flock, the lamb is its humble follower. The ram is armed with ten horns, symbolising great physical strength. The lamb has only two small horns. Its power is of another kind than that represented by horns. It wields extensive powers, as we shall see presently, but they are of the spiritual order. Later on in the Apocalypse we are told specifically that the beast from the earth, likened to a lamb, is “ the false prophet,” an expression which indicates the priesthood.

“ And the beast was taken, and with him the false

prophet who wrought signs before him " (Rev. xix. 20).

The researches of Dean Stanley on the Jewish Church, and Professor Fairbairn on Prophecy, have shown that the word " prophet," in its Scriptural meaning, does not necessarily imply the gift of prediction. The word simply meant one who spoke by supernatural impulse. The mouthpiece, as it were, of God.

Classical writers used the expression in the same sense. Apollo was called the prophet of Jupiter, because Jupiter spoke through him. Pythia, the priestess of Apollo, was called, in like manner, the prophetess of Apollo, and her attendants the prophets of Pythia.

This was also the Hebrew use of the word " prophet." It is retained in the Greek of the Septuagint, and by the writers of the New Testament.

The Rev. T. L. Scott sums up our knowledge of the nature of prophecy in his book, *The Visions of the Apocalypse* (1893). He says: " The New Testament use of the word ' prophet ' and ' prophecy ' is entirely consistent with what we have found in the Old Testament, for here also we find the word ' prophet ' applied to two classes of persons, first to those who hold an office which constitutes them God's spokesmen, and secondly to those who, whether they have or have not a regular and permanent official appointment, yet are on special occasions moved by Divine impulse to declare God's will " (p. 18).

This New Testament view of the word " prophet " agrees perfectly with the idea that the false prophet of the Apocalypse was put for the priesthood of idolatry. The priests held an office which constituted them the spokesmen of the gods. They pretended to be in-

spired by their false gods, and occasionally by means of voice-tubes, or with the aid of pythonic women, made the gods appear to speak oracularly.

The earliest oracle, it is interesting to note, was derived from Gæa, or Ge, the Earth. The Delphic Oracle was originally of this character. Pythia, a woman seer, in a state of trance, spoke in later times for the god Apollo. There was a staff of priests and prophets attached to these oracular centres.

When St Paul visited Philippi, "a certain girl, having a pythonical spirit, met us, who brought to her masters much gain by divining. . . . But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit: I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to go out from her. And he went out the same hour. But her masters, seeing that the hope of their gain was gone, apprehending Paul and Silas, brought them into the market place to the rulers" (Acts xvi. 16-18).

The first beast, with ten horns, is put for the power of the sword of Empire; the second beast, like a lamb with two horns, is put for the priesthood, which had the pretence of sanctity and zeal for religion. In the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord warned the people to "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. vii. 15). We are told many things about the lamb which help us to identify it with the pagan priesthood. Although it had the outward appearance of a lamb, it "spoke as a dragon." The lamb spoke as a dragon because he was the mouth-piece or prophet of the dragon. The early Christians looked upon the oracles of the temples as diabolical manifestations, and all temple jugglery as pure satanism. St Paul says: "But the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to

God" (1 Cor. x. 20). So Leviticus: "And they shall no more sacrifice their victims to devils." Also: "They sacrifice to devils and not to God, to gods whom they know not" (Deut. xxxii. 17).

The dragon makes his appearance in the Apocalyptic drama before the beast from the sea. We are told later on that he is "the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan" (Rev. xx. 2). He is shown to be in close alliance with the first beast, or Roman Empire: "And the dragon gave him his own strength and great power" (Rev. xiii. 2). The second beast, from the earth, came last. "And he executed all the powers of the former beast in his sight" (Rev. xiii. 12). These three, the devil, the Empire, and the pagan priesthood, are put forward as the great antagonists of Christianity in the Roman theme of the book of Revelation. The devil desired to overthrow Christianity by means of Cæsar worship. The emperors, carried away by pride and vanity, sought to be worshipped as gods; the devil gave them strength and power, and the pagan priesthood humbly carried out their decrees.

The "lamb" spoke as a dragon. Later on the matter is explained: "And it was given to him to give life to the image of the beast, and that the image of the beast should speak" (Rev. xiii. 15).

The beast was Cæsar. The image of the beast was the bust of Cæsar, to which divine worship was given. It was a great part of the duty of the pagan priesthood to pretend that the image of Cæsar had the life and power of a god.

We now come to the Apocalyptic description of the work of the "beast from the earth," which is in all respects in conformity with its symbolising the pagan priesthood.

The first beast, the emperor reigning at any time within the period of pagan persecutions, influenced by the dragon, issued edicts of persecution against the Christians. These laws concerning religious observances came into the hands of the magisterial priesthood for execution. So the Apocalypse goes on to say of the "beast from the earth": "And he executed all the powers of the former beast in his sight, and he caused the earth and them that dwell therein to adore the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" (Rev. xiii. 12).

The "beast from the earth" was concerned with religious worship. He made "the earth and them that dwell therein" (the pagan empire and its inhabitants) "adore the first beast," *i.e.*, the emperor.

Cæsar worship, the most formidable weapon of the dragon in those days, came into existence not long before our Lord appeared upon the earth. It began with the apotheosis of Julius Cæsar. A temple of *Dea Roma* and *Divus Julius* was erected at Ephesus about 29 B.C. Augustus, who had refused divine honours at Rome, allowed temples to be erected to himself in the great cities of Asia.

Sir W. M. Ramsay writes: "Augustus had been a saviour to the Asian peoples, and they deified him as the Saviour of mankind, and worshipped him with the most whole-hearted devotion as the God incarnate in human form, the 'present deity.' He alone stood between them and death or a life misery and torture. They hailed the birthday of Augustus as the beginning of a new year, and worshipped the incarnate God in public and in private" (*Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 115).

"A shrine and a great altar to Augustus was placed in the sacred precinct of the goddess at

Ephesus in the earlier years of his reign: it is taken as a type on coins of the Commune (Fig. 17), where the two sacred stags mark the close connection between the imperial and the Ephesian religions, even at that early time" (Ramsay, *op. cit.* p. 231).

In the year 26 A.D. Sardis contended with Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos, for the honour of possessing a new temple to be erected by the Commune of Asia to Tiberius, and Sardis obtained the Niokorate.

Philadelphia founded a cult of Germanicus, the adopted son and heir of Tiberius.

Caligula insisted on divine honours being paid to him during his lifetime, and tried to force the imperial cult even upon the Jews by placing his image in the Temple of Jerusalem and other temples.

Provincial temples were erected to Nero; and the great cities of Asia vied with each other for the honour of being temple-wardens or Niokorates of the imperial cult.

The ancient gods of Rome were creatures of fancy, the result of an instinctive outstretching of the human mind to the supernatural in the unseen world. These dumb gods of bronze and stone had already multiplied to such an extent that they were discredited in the eyes of educated men. Rome was a perfect museum of the pagan gods of the Empire. It had 420 temples to as many gods. St Paul found, at Athens, an altar to "the unknown God"! The world was ripe for some more reasonable and tangible idea of the Divinity. The wide spread of Judaism, with its system of monotheism, had paved the way for Christ. We know how quickly the Christian faith spread throughout the Roman Empire. Then Cæsar worship was cunningly entwined with politics, and with the question of the consolidation of the Roman Empire. It became

the settled policy of Rome to encourage, and if need be coerce, its subjects into the imperial worship, with a view to its own stability and permanence. Cæsar worship became identified with the power and majesty and solidarity of the Empire. It swept aside in time all other cults, and reigned supreme in the hearts and homes of those who believed themselves to be true patriots and imperialists. Sacrifice to the Emperor became the touchstone of loyalty as well as of religion.

The new imperialism had made, as we have seen, considerable progress when the Apocalypse was published, more especially in the cities of Asia Minor, to which the book is addressed. It is generally admitted now that the chief aim of the Roman theme, which deals with the beast and the false prophet, was to condemn the cult of the divinity of Cæsar and warn the Church against it, whilst foretelling its ultimate overthrow.

The pagan priesthood, or "beast from the earth," particularly the Asiarchs or high priests of the cult in Asia, were naturally well disposed to encourage the deification of the Emperor, who was Pontifex Maximus of their order, and who had many favours at his disposal, as well as condign punishments. To incur his displeasure was a very different matter from incurring that of their own local gods, whose impotence they well knew.

"And he did great signs, so that he even made fire to come down from heaven upon the earth in the sight of men, and he seduced them that dwell on the earth, by the signs which were given him to perform in the sight of the beast, saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by the sword and lived.

And it was given him to give life to the image of the beast, and that the image of the beast should speak; and should cause that whosoever will not adore the image of the beast should be slain" (Rev. xiii. 13-15).

The priests seduced some by signs and others by force to make an image of the beast and adore it. Those who would not adore the Divus Imperator were slain.

"And he shall make all, both little and great, rich and poor, freeman and bondman, to have a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads. And that no man might buy or sell, but he that hath the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. xiii. 16-17).

The priests took care that the ordinary transactions of daily life, such as buying and selling, should be accompanied by some overt act of worship of the emperors, so that no one, little or great, rich or poor, could escape their meshes. It is probable that a small image of the deified Emperor was in every shop or bazaar stall, which customers were expected to salute in Eastern fashion, by salaaming or touching their foreheads to it. The salaam was the mark of recognition or honour universally given in the East to a superior, or to anything worthy of homage. In India, where idolatry still exists, one may see the pagan natives salaaming their village idols. Images of the imperial gods, small and large, must have been at one time very plentiful, judging from the numbers still found in the museums of the world.

Tertullian, writing, about the year 200, notices this state of affairs. He says: "The innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of business or pleasure, of public or private life, and it seemed impos-

sible to escape the observance of them without at the same time renouncing the commerce of mankind and all the offices and amusements of society" (*De Corona Militis*, c. x).

Those who failed to comply with these observances were, in periods of persecution, denounced to the authorities as Christian atheists and traitors to the Emperor. These, and others suspected of being Christians, were haled before the tribunals to make the sacrifice to the imperial gods. This sacrifice involved "a mark in the right hand." Those who refused to sacrifice were given a last chance at some public festival, in the stadium, where a martyr's death awaited their constancy to the Christian faith.

Eusebius, who lived through the tenth persecution, describes how the ceremony, alluded to in the Apocalypse as "a mark in the right hand," was performed. He says that "edicts were also issued, in which it was ordered that all the prelates in every place should first be committed to prison, and then by every artifice constrained to offer sacrifice to the gods." . . . "Here one, whilst some forced him to the impure and detestable sacrifices, was again dismissed, as if he had sacrificed, although this was not the case. There another, though he had not in the least approached the altar, not even touched the unholy thing, yet, when others said that he had sacrificed, went away, bearing the calumny in silence. Here one, again, taken up when half-dead, was thrown out as if he were already dead; there another again, lying upon the ground, was dragged a long distance by the feet, and numbered among those that had sacrificed. . . . Thus the enemies of religion, upon the whole, deemed it a great matter even to appear to have gained some advantage" (*Hist.* bk. VIII. 2-3).

“ One was seized by the hands and led to the altar by others, who were thrusting the polluted and unhallowed victim into his right hand, and then suffered to go again as if he had sacrificed. Another, though he had not even touched, when others said that he had sacrificed, went away in silence ” (*Martyrs of Palestine*, c. i). From which it appears that the act of taking the sacrificial meat in the right hand was the test employed. The meat stained the right hand, and that mark was the proof of sacrifice, the mark of the beast. These things, related by Eusebius, took place in the tenth persecution, in the nineteenth year of the reign of Diocletian, A.D. 303.

Pliny's report to Trajan, on the Christians of Bithynia, shows that in the third persecution, 112 A.D., they were called upon to offer incense before the statue of the Emperor and to curse Christ.

The mark on the forehead, where all is symbolism, may be taken symbolically. It is so taken previously in the Apocalypse, which may be for our guidance. At Rev. vii. 3, when punishment is about to fall upon the Jews, an angel cries out: “ Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we seal the servants of our God in their foreheads.” Then twelve thousand of each of the twelve tribes are sealed. This sealing we take to be the sign of the Cross made on the forehead in baptism. It is the sign of Christianity. It is alluded to again at Rev. ix. 4, where we find the locusts, who came out of the pit, commanded that “ they should not hurt the grass of the earth nor any green thing nor any tree, but only the men who have not the sign of God in their foreheads.” The absence of the sign from the forehead is put forward in the Jewish theme of the Apocalypse as the mark of the non-Christian, marked out for punishment. In the

Roman theme, it is put forward, in almost the same words, as the mark of the pagan destined to destruction. The inscription of Abercius, a Christian *stele*, or inscribed slab, bearing the date of the year 300 of the Phrygian era (A.D. 216), mentions that he saw a people at Rome bearing a shining mark, *i.e.*, of baptism (*Cath. Encyc.* p. 40). This seems to show that the mark on the forehead was current symbolism. St Augustine had this in his mind, apparently, when he wrote, *In fronte propter professionem, in manu propter operationem*. A similar idea is put forward by Ramsay: "One who was notoriously and conspicuously loyal might be said to carry the mark on his forehead" (*Letters to the S. C.* p. III).

But there is question also of "the name of the beast," which we have assumed to be Cæsar. All are compelled to name the beast.

Eusebius relates that when St Polycarp was led to martyrdom, in the second century, "He was met by Herod, who was the Irenarch, and his father Nicetes, who, taking him in their vehicle, persuaded him to take a seat with them, and said: 'For what harm is there in saying, Lord Cæsar, and to sacrifice, and thus save your life'" (*Hist.* bk. IV. c. xv). But Polycarp, refusing, was taken to the stadium, where the proconsul urged him. "Have a regard for your age," he said. "Swear by the genius of Cæsar" (*Ib.*) Swearing by the genius of Cæsar, or calling upon that name in the presence of the image of the "divine Cæsar," was evidently one of the tests of conformity to paganism exacted from Christians, tried for their religion and their lives in the old Roman Empire.

Throughout the vast extent of Roman territory this policy was pursued of opposing Christianity, by all means, by artifice, persuasion, rewards and pun-

ishments, torture and death, at intervals for over two hundred years.

It will be allowed that the life of no single individual could by any possibility extend over the historic period filled by "the beast from the earth." Neither could any single individual so multiply himself as to do the work of that "beast" in promoting the worship of the Cæsars in all parts of the Roman Empire. As we are not dealing with mythology, but with the history of a well-known country and period, it is fair to point out that there is no record of the "beast from the earth," also called "the false prophet," as such, in Roman history. The Roman theme of the Apocalypse is designedly surrounded by symbolism. The key to that symbolism has been found to be in the name of Nero, the reigning Cæsar, representing the line of the Cæsars, who was the "Beast from the sea." The context shows that the "Beast from the earth" symbolised an analogous and closely allied power. The details given show that power to be concerned in public worship. It is natural to conclude that the pagan hierarchy is referred to. Now we have this conclusion reinforced by the evidence that these two powers worked together throughout a long period of Roman history.

The Apocalypse describes some phases of this long struggle between paganism and Christianity. When the final battle between the forces of God Almighty and those of the pagan Empire was impending, as described in the Apocalypse, we are shown the three enemies of the Christian faith, in council of war assembled together.

"And I saw from the mouth of the dragon, and from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.

For they are the spirits of devils working signs: and they go forth unto the kings of the whole earth to gather them to battle against the great day of the Almighty God" (Rev. xvi. 13-14).

In this passage another function of the pagan priesthood is referred to.

On all great occasions, more especially with reference to declarations of war, it was the custom of the Romans to consult the will of the gods by means of augury. There was a college of augurs at Rome, composed of men of distinction, whose business it was to consult the will of Jupiter by means of signs gathered from the direction of lightning, or the flight or feeding of birds, or other supposed warning phenomena. Before the battle of Armagedon, fought between the Romans and Huns under Attila, at Châlons-sur-Marne, the augurs were solemnly consulted. They, animated by "the spirits of devils working signs," found signs favourable to a declaration of war. Messengers were sent "to the kings of the whole earth to gather them to battle." The earth here stands for the Roman Empire, and the kings for her subject, but independent princes. "For God hath given into their hearts to do that which pleaseth him; that they give their kingdom to the beast till the words of God be fulfilled" (Rev. xvii. 17).

The Senator Avitus was despatched to the barbarian kings to persuade them to join forces with Rome against the invading Huns. He succeeded in getting together, under the Roman banner, the Goths, the Visigoths, the Burgundians, the Heruli, the Thuringians, the Rugiens, the Saxons, the Franks, the Alani, the Læti, the Breones, and the Sarmatians (Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, c. xxxv). These are the ten horns of the "beast from the sea." An

angel explains the symbol. "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom, but shall receive power as kings, one hour after the beast" (Rev. xvii. 12). They had not yet received a kingdom when the Apocalypse was written in the year 67 A.D. It was useless to look for them. Their kingdoms would be established one hour after the beast, that is, on the crumbling power of the Roman Empire.

"These have one design, and their strength and power they shall deliver to the beast" (Rev. xvii. 13). On this historic occasion, when the great battle which was to shatter the supremacy of Rome was impending, the ten horns fought on the side of Rome.

"They shall fight with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them because he is Lord of lords, and King of kings" (Rev. xvii. 14).

Attila, King of the Huns, in his northern wilds, had long cherished the idea of chastising Rome. Warning voices seemed to him to call upon him and mark him out for this divinely appointed mission. He animated his followers with this idea, that they were predestined to overthrow the power which "sat upon" peoples, nations and tongues. An angel explained the meaning of sitting on to St John. "And he said to me: The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and nations, and tongues" (Rev. xvii. 15).

In the year 451 Attila, who was known as *The Scourge of God*, invaded the Roman Empire, and at Châlons-sur-Marne, gave battle to Rome and her allies, under Ætius, who was known from the event as the "last of the Romans." The battle was fought on a gigantic scale. There are said to have been about a million of men engaged in hand-to-hand fight, of whom

about two hundred and fifty thousand were left dead upon the field. The Roman armies were defeated. In the following year Attila again invaded Italy and captured the City of Rome.

This battle is named Armagedon in the Apocalypse. "The spirits of devils" "working signs" who went forth from the mouth of the dragon, the mouth of the beast and the mouth of the false prophet to gather the kings of the whole earth, or Roman Empire, to battle against the great day of the Almighty God, gathered "them together into a place which is called in Hebrew Armagedon" (Rev. xvi. 16); that is to say, the Hebrew meaning of the place is "the scene of lamentations and the downfall of kings" (see 4 Kings ix. 27, and xxiii. 29-30).

And when, after the battle, the power of pagan Rome was finally broken, the "Beast from the sea," and the "false prophet" are represented as disappearing together. That there may be no mistake about the "false prophet" being the "beast from the earth" he is identified, in the last paragraph, by his works.

"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet, who wrought signs before him, wherewith he seduced them who received the mark of the beast, and who adored his image. These two were cast alive into the pool of fire, burning with brimstone" (Rev. xix, 20).

This is the end of the Roman theme of the Apocalypse. It signalises the abolition of the Roman Empire and paganism. After this the devil is chained up for a thousand years, and the Church enjoys a millennium of peace, so far as devilish persecution and heresy are concerned.

But there may be a historic question whether "the

false prophet " or pagan hierarchy, remained on the stage of life down to the year 451 A.D., the date of the battle of Châlons-sur-Marne. Constantine the Great is supposed to have Christianised Rome early in the fourth century.

Rome was not converted to Christianity all at once. It took many years to overthrow the forces of paganism. The Senate, the aristocracy, and the wealth of the country were all bound up with the worship of the temples. Even Constantine retained his position of Pontifex Maximus. Julian the Apostate had no difficulty in reviving the worship of the gods. Cæsar worship continued more or less till the time of Gratian. It was the Emperor Marcian who swept away the last traces of paganism from the Roman Empire, about the middle of the fifth century; so that the two events (the break-up of the Roman Empire and of paganism) actually coincided in point of time.

The figure of Antichrist has been imported into this theme of the Apocalypse by some commentators. It fills so large a space in their picture of the break-up of Rome that many of its real features have been obscured. Those who would suppose a False Prophet-Antichrist moving in the final drama of the world have to reckon with the fact that the beast and "the false prophet" were "cast alive into the pool of fire burning with brimstone" in the sixth century; and this pool, we are given to understand at Rev. xx. 9-10, is hell, out of which there is no redemption. The Apocalypse goes on to describe the millennium, and after that the loosing of Satan from his prison, the final apostasy of the nations, and their assault upon the Church in the last days. All this in a brief, compressed way, as not designed to disclose the details of what is coming.

If there is to be an Antichrist at the end of the world, he is not "the beast" or the "false prophet" cast into the pool of fire. For when the devil himself, after the final assault, is cast into the pool of fire and brimstone, he finds the "beast" and the "false prophet" still there (Rev. xx. 9-10).

There are two accounts of the last days given in the Apocalypse, one in Chapter xx. and the other under the guise of the Church of Laodicea; in neither of them is there the slightest reference to Antichrist.

IV

On Revelation xiv. 20

THE translation of the Greek of Rev. xiv. 20, made use of in Catholic and Protestant Bibles alike, so far as its final words are concerned, is as follows: "And the winepress was trodden without the city: and blood came out of the winepress, even up to the horses' bridles for a thousand and six hundred furlongs." This passage occurs in the Roman theme of the Apocalypse. It is a measure of the vengeance of God upon *the earth* or pagan inhabitants of the Roman Empire, who are punished for persecuting Christianity.

It follows upon the action of an angel who "put his sharp sickle to the earth and gathered the vineyard of the earth and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God" (Rev. xiv. 19).

"The vineyard of the earth" is contrasted with the "True Vine."

"In the Prophets the harvest, whether wheat harvest or vintage, represents the overthrow of the enemy of Israel, who are ripe for their fall" (Swete, *The Apocalypse*, p. 190). St John makes use of this Old Testament symbolism to show forth the overthrow of the enemies of Christianity.

The angel put his sickle, εἰς τὴν γῆν, to the earth, and reaped the vineyard of the earth, τῆς γῆς. These expressions denote in the Apocalypse the pagan Romans, men of the earth, earthy. The governing passage is found in the opening theme of the book, "How long, O Lord (holy and true) dost thou not

judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. vi. 10.)

The vengeance of God is called down "on them that dwell on the earth," ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Why? Because of their shedding of innocent Christian blood, shed for the faith. It is the martyrs whose cry ascends to Heaven. St John saw, "under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord?'" The martyrs are told to wait. "White stoles were given, to each of them one: and it was said to them, that they should rest yet for a little time, till their fellow servants and their brethren, who were to be slain even as they, should be filled up" (Rev. vi. 11). We now pass to the close of the Roman theme, which is a picture of retributive justice. The vengeance of God falls upon the earth, ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, and the vineyard of the earth is gathered to the winepress. The fruit gathered was evidently human, for "blood came out of the winepress, even up to horses' bridles."

There is question here of "blood for blood," and the measure of it.

The key to this symbolism is found in Isaías lxiii. 3, "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the Gentiles there is not a man with me: I have trampled upon them in my indignation, and have trodden them down in my wrath."

The juice of the grape was formerly, and still is, generally collected in the winepress, by the pressure of human feet. But there is a peculiarity about this metaphor which requires explanation. Blood standing up to horses' bridles for sixteen hundred furlongs is an unnatural figure, a faulty metaphor. It is impossible to imagine a fluid wall of blood standing up in a

line, two hundred miles long. Blood is a fluid, and it must obey natural laws. When blood is shed, it sinks into the ground or runs away in streams.

Again, even if we would suppose such a phenomenon as a wall of blood, the figure is defective in another way. It is length and height without breadth. The third dimension is wanting. Therefore it is not expressive of quantity, but it was evidently intended to be a figure of quantity.

This is all the more remarkable as no faulty figure is found elsewhere in the book of Revelation. On the contrary, the book is noted for the truth and sublimity of its symbolism. The question hence arises, May not this be due to some mistake of ours? As a matter of fact, it seems to be due to a very simple error, viz., translating the Greek word *σταδίων*, used by St John, into furlongs. The use of the word furlong in the above passage obscures St John's meaning and spoils the beauty of his metaphor.

It has given rise to many conjectures as to what was his object in fixing the limit of the blood at sixteen hundred furlongs. It has been supposed by some that he had the dimensions of hell in his mind (see Cornelius a Lapide), and by others the length of Palestine, or the breadth of Italy, in the latitude of Rome. But we shall see presently that he was not thinking of length, or measurements as expressed in the word furlongs.

Verses 18, 19 and 20 of Chapter xiv. of the Apocalypse summarise the vengeance of God upon Rome, and express it in terms of bloodshed. We have another summary of God's vengeance upon Rome in Chapter ix., when four angels "bound in the great river Euphrates" are loosed. "And the four angels were loosed, who were prepared for an

hour, and a day, and a month, and a year; for to kill the third part of men. And the number of the army of horsemen was twenty thousand times ten thousand. And I heard the number of them" (Rev. ix. 15-16).

Here 200,000,000 horsemen are symbolic of Parthian warriors from the Euphrates and of all barbarian invaders of the Roman Empire, whose slaughtering armies crushed the power of Rome. These operating for the indefinite period symbolised by all measures of time (which we know now represented about four centuries) destroyed the third part or pagan part of mankind. These two measures of slaughter in Chapter ix., and bloodshed in Chapter xiv. correspond with each other.

Later on the book deals again, in a similar general way, with God's vengeance upon Babylon, by which term pagan Rome was known amongst Christians. Here we find this sentence, "Render to her as she also hath rendered to you: and double ye the double according to her works: in the cup wherein she hath mingled, mingle unto her double" (Rev. xviii. 6). What is the meaning of "double ye the double according to her works"? What are the works referred to?

The book of Revelation was called forth by the bloody persecutions which the Christians suffered at the hands of pagan Rome. A great part of the book, all that relating to Rome, is written round and about the shedding of martyrs' blood by Rome and the consequent vengeance of God upon Rome. We may safely conclude that the works in question here were those of bloodshed in religious persecution.

There were ten persecutions of the^r Christians by Rome. These may be said to have had their principal

foci in the great cities of the Empire. The place of bloodshed was usually in the public amphitheatres.

There the Christians were exposed to wild beasts, or they were burnt alive, or tortured to death in some other cruel way. In those days the public arena was known as the stadium.

Eusebius, who witnessed the tenth persecution, mentions the stadium as the chief place of martyrdom in his day. He quotes from an epistle of the Church of Smyrna to that of Pontus, in which the stadium of Smyrna is named as the scene of St Polycarp's martyrdom in the second century (*Hist.* iv. 15).

Tertullian wrote: "If the Tiber rises, if the Nile does not rise, if the heavens give no rain, if there is an earthquake, famine or pestilence, straightway the cry is, 'The Christians to the lions'" (*Apolog.* 40). The *Acta* of Paul and Thekla show the settled custom of exposing Christians to wild beasts in the stadium in the first century. The fate of St Polycarp in the second century points to the same conclusion. The testimony of Eusebius, the ecclesiastical historian, in the third century (*Hist.* viii. 23; *Mart. of Palest.*, c. i.) shows that this custom of converting Christian martyrdoms into an exhibition for the pleasure of the pagan public, in the amphitheatres, was usual throughout the Empire during the ages of persecution. In the *Acta martyrum* these arenas are called indifferently stadii and amphitheatres. An inscription at Laodicea, of the first half of the second century mentions the stadium amphitheatre (Ramsay, *Bishoprics*, p. 72).

"Double ye the double according to her works" means, therefore, the retributive slaughter of the pagan persecutors of the Church. And the measure of

it, blood up to horses' bridles, in sixteen hundred stadii or amphitheatres.

Now sixteen hundred is the square of four multiplied by one hundred ($4 \times 4 \times 100$). It is not itself a definite figure, but a symbol of amplitude, corresponding with "double the double." It means that the blood penalty exacted from the pagan persecutors of the Church shall be so great that 1,600 stadii filled with blood up to the level of horses' bridles fittingly symbolises it.

A stadium, with closed, watertight doors, formed a basin capable of holding water. Many stadii, such as the Colosseum at Rome, were actually used for aquatic displays and mimic naval battles. At other times the stadii were used for horse and chariot races. The principal elements in St John's metaphor, horses and liquid blood, were often seen, and seen together, in the stadii. The measure of blood standing up to the level of horses' bridles in sixteen hundred stadii is a perfectly natural one, which would be easily comprehended by the readers of the Apocalypse in the first centuries. As a figure of the enormous bloodshed in the wars of the decaying Roman Empire, it is not extraordinary.

The question now arises how it comes to pass that the word *σταδίων* used by St John was converted into furlongs?

From a very remote antiquity there existed a temple of Jupiter, at Olympus, in Greece, in connection with which, in the outer court, there were celebrated games and athletic contests every four years. The most popular of these contests was the *stadion*, or foot-race for men, over a track about 200 yards in length. Longer races, horse and chariot races and other races were added, and in the course of time the

Olympic games became a very prominent feature in the life of Greece. The traditional list of victors began in 776 B.C. About four centuries B.C. the great stadium of Olympus was built for the purpose of these contests and to enable as many as possible to witness them. This great stadium, so to speak, "enshrined" the stadion, which was then about 220 yards in length.

In later years other cities of Greece, of Asia Minor and of Italy, built stadii, or amphitheatres, of their own, for the purpose of celebrating periodical athletic contests and races of different kinds. These copied the stadium of Olympus, more or less accurately, as to the length of the racecourse. In time the stadion became the universal measure of distance where the civilization of Greece or Rome had taken root. Herodotus, "the father of history," 431 B.C., used stadii as a measure of length. The Romans used it as the basis of their mile, which consisted of eight stadii. It passed into Britain as the furlong. Gradually, in mediæval days, as the arenas of antiquity fell into disuse and crumbled to ruins, the only meaning of the word stadium which survived was that of a unit of length. Hence translators from the Greek of St John in later times turned the word *σταδίων* into furlongs, oblivious of the meaning of stadium as a public amphitheatre.

When St John wrote the Apocalypse and sent it to Ephesus, the meaning of the word stadium as an arena was in full currency. There were stadii and games at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos and Sardis. The Laodicean stadium had lately been ruined by an earthquake. The cities of Asia Minor were Greek in their ideas, language and civilization. The title of *Niokoros* was conferred by the Senate upon a provincial town which erected and dedicated a temple and

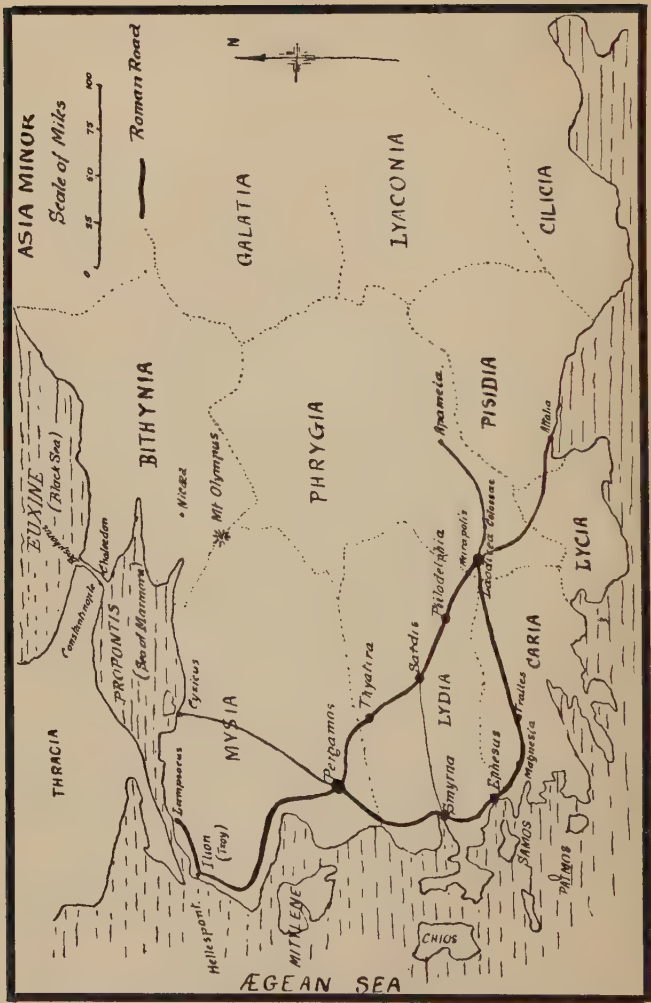
games to the imperial gods. Three of the seven cities of Asia Minor laid claim to the title before the Apocalypse was written. Their Asiarchs were destined to provide, in later times, Christian martyrs for the displays of the arenas.

The brethren would understand St John's meaning only too well. More especially would they do so at Rome, where the stadium of Nero was already reeking with Christian blood.

It should be noted that owing to its great size the stadium required more room than could be given to it within the busy hive of city life. For this reason it was built without the city. In many cases it was built outside for another reason also. The expense of building it was so great that a bare hillside or natural slope in the neighbourhood of the city was chosen as a convenient and economic site for the building. The Apocalypse notices this arrangement. It says, "And the winepress was trodden without the city." The bearing of this remark, taken in connection with stadii, as amphitheatres, is now plain. Formerly it was not understood.

The stadium of Nero at Rome was a small building which occupied a position where the piazza of St Peter is now placed. The present stadium or Colosseum, which stands beyond the forum, was begun by Vespasian in the year 72 A.D. and finished by Domitian ten years later. Its name is believed by many to be derived from its colossal size. It held 70,000 spectators.





V

The Seven Churches of Asia

THE letters to "the Seven Churches of Asia," in the beginning of the book of Revelation, have generally been taken to be a revelation of the spiritual condition of those Churches; with an application to churches of a similar type in any age or country.

The Venerable Holzhauser, a German ecclesiastic who wrote a commentary on the Apocalypse in the seventeenth century, found in these messages a prediction of the spiritual state of the Church of Christ in the seven ages of its existence. This view has been extended in a book on the Apocalypse, lately published by the present writer, which has been received without disfavour.

But the corresponding argument that the messages did not apply to the local Churches to which they were nominally sent has not been broached. Yet it is a corollary of the first importance, and it is our duty to examine it impartially, and press it, if it appears to be true. There is nothing unorthodox about this. It is purely a question of exegesis which falls within the limits prescribed by the present Holy Father, Pius X., in a letter to Bishop Le Camus, dated in the year 1906.

The letter is as follows:

"As we must condemn the temerity of those who, having more regard for novelty than for the teaching authority of the Church, do not hesitate to adopt a

method of criticism altogether too free, so we should not approve the attitude of those who in no way dare to depart from the usual exegesis of Scripture, even when, faith not being at stake, the real advancement of learning requires such departure. You follow a wise course, and show by your example that there is nothing to be feared for the sacred books from the true progress of the art of criticism; nay, that a beneficial light can be derived from it, provided its use be coupled with a wise and prudent discernment" (*The Examiner*, Sept. 29, 1906).

Dr Barry, in his manual for priests and students, on *The Tradition of Scripture*, published in the year 1906, says: "No view of the date, compilation, or literal meaning [of the Apocalypse] has ever been sanctioned by authority" (p. 198).

Far-reaching consequences hang upon this inquiry. If we find that the letters were not intended for the local Churches of Asia Minor, but for the universal Church of all time, the messages will have to be re-examined and closely scrutinised from the point of view of history. From data already obtained, we may be sure that this will lead to most interesting and important conclusions respecting the past and future of the Church, the millennium, and the position of the Church of the twentieth century in the secular scale. Before studying the messages to the particular churches, some considerations of a general kind claim our attention.

The Apocalypse is divided into two parts; the first contains the letters to the Seven Churches of Asia. It is prefaced by a vision of our Lord in the midst of the Seven Churches, holding the angels, or chief bishops of the Churches, in His right hand. The letters follow, and are sent from God, identified appropriately by

one of His characteristics, taken from the vision in the preface to the letters.

The general revelation begins at chapter iv. "Come up hither and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter" (Rev. iv. 1). Then there is a vision of the throne of God, which forms the preface to the rest of the book, whose action begins in chapter v. with the seven seals. All that part of the book, from chapter iv. onwards, is complete in itself, and could have been given to the Church without the preliminary letters addressed to the Seven Churches of Asia. On the other hand, the letters are not independent of the rest of the book. They depend, in many cases, on the final chapters of the book for illustration and confirmation of their meaning. They are prefixed to the preface proper to the book, *i.e.*, chapter iv. We believe that they dedicate the whole book to the past and future of the Catholic Church, and, that being so, they must be, in the nature of things, symbolical.

If the letters were intended for the Churches to which they are addressed, why were they not sent each to each, as St Paul sent his Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, for example? Why were the seven letters sent to each Church? Why were they incorporated in a book sent to the Universal Church? Why was this book sent to seven Churches? Why not to six or eight? Why not to one Church, St John's own Church at Ephesus, to which place, in fact, the book was first sent? Was there any symbolism contained in the number seven? The answers to all these questions will be found in the answer to the last question. There was symbolism in the number seven. It was the well-known symbol of completeness. The number seven, scripturally, is a mystic number,

denoting an indefinite number, generally more than seven. It means the number required to complete the series, be it of years, of dynasties, of afflictions, or of Churches. It is so used in the Apocalypse. We have the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven heads. But, especially, we have the seven golden candlesticks, which are "the Seven Churches."

The letters preface the book, and chapter i. prefaces the letters and to some extent explains their meaning. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying: What thou seest write in a book; and send to the seven churches which are in Asia, to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me: and being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks. And in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, one like unto the Son of Man. . . . And he had in his right hand seven stars. . . . And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying: Fear not: I am the first and the last. . . . Write, therefore, the things which thou hast seen, and which are, and which must be done hereafter. The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches" (Rev. i. 10-20).

The first and most important point to notice is that this is a vision of the future. St John was "in the Spirit," "and heard *behind*" *him* a voice, "saying: What thou seest write in a book and send to the seven churches which are in Asia." Behind one in prophecy means after one in point of time, and refers to the future. Accordingly, St John "turned to see

the voice," "and being turned saw seven golden candlesticks," corresponding to the Seven Churches.

This imagery places the Seven Churches in the future very distinctly. The prophets looked upon history as a procession of events. As in a procession the leader must turn round and look behind him to see what is coming after him, so the prophet turns round to see the events which follow after him in point of time. Looking behind him into the future, St John saw seven golden candlesticks, which our Lord tells him, "are the seven churches," subsequently named, from Ephesus to Laodicea. But the seven golden candlesticks were a familiar figure to St John and his Hebrew disciples. They had a prominent place, the Temple of Jerusalem. The seven golden candlesticks were not seven separate candlesticks. They sprang from one stem, common to all, which united them into one solid candlestick. This seven-branched candlestick was taken to Rome by Titus, and it still figures, in sculpture, on the arch of Titus, close to the forum, at Rome. It symbolises, in the Apocalypse, by its seven branches or lamps, the complete cycle of the Church in its secular aspect; and the seven lamps or candlesticks in their union with each other, through their foundation and support, symbolise the union of the Church in all its ages with its founder and supporter, Jesus Christ.

This at once invests each and every one of the Seven Churches of Asia with a symbolical significance. Collectively, they stand for the universal church of the future; the Church of all time. Individually, they stand for the different ages of the Church.

The messages are addressed to the Seven Churches of Asia, as if there were only seven, or the seven principal Churches of the Province of Asia were named. Whereas

there were other Churches, and so far from their being the principal Churches of Asia, two of them, Philadelphia and Thyatira, were almost unknown. Hence the expression, "the seven churches of Asia" appears to have a symbolical significance also, which would be quite in keeping with the rest of the book. As if to warn us from taking the view that the messages were intended for the particular Churches named, they are selected, as we shall find, as stages in a circular tour of St John's district. The Seven Churches to which the book of Revelation was sent, viz., Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, occurred in that order on the main Roman road circulating in St John's district. A messenger, starting from Ephesus, the nearest landing place to Patmos, making a tour of the district, would follow the high road north to Smyrna and Pergamos, thence turning south with the road, he would come to Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, in the order named. In that way he would make the most convenient and speedy delivery of letters intended for the Churches of Asia Minor.

Sir W. M. Ramsay says: "It is inconceivable that St John would simply write to seven churches, taken at random out of the province, which had been so long under his charge and ignore the rest" (*The Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 176). But these Churches are only differentiated from a random selection, inasmuch as they follow each other in geographical sequence on the trunk road. The bearing of this on the theory of symbolism is obvious. If the Seven Churches were merely symbols of the seven ages of the universal Church, it was natural that St John should select them in the sequence in which they would occur to his mind, contemplating a tour

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of his province, from the starting point of Ephesus, his headquarters. (See map of the district of the Seven Churches of Asia.)

But Sir W. M. Ramsay aims at showing that the seven cities were selected, because they were the natural centres of distribution of the district, from which the book could be sent to all parts of the world. He says: "All the seven cities stand on the great circular road, that bound together the most populous, wealthy and influential part of the Province, the great central region" (*op. cit.* p. 183). They were centres of distribution from the Roman road to other roads leading to the interior. "Thus," as Dr Swete puts it, "the route prescribed in the Apocalypse provided for the circulation of the book throughout the Churches of the entire province and beyond it" (*The Apocalypse*, p. ix).

Both of these learned writers on the Apocalypse. apparently favour the view that the selection was governed by local considerations. If the letters were intended for the seven postal centres to which they are addressed, they reveal the inner religious life of seven postal centres of Asia Minor in the first century, which seems, on the whole, a strange thing in itself, and incommensurate with the importance which has always been attached to those letters, and which they undoubtedly deserve. They are a portion of the deposit of Revelation given to the Church at large, and not the least important portion. But, as a matter of fact, the letters were sent to Seven Churches, in seven cities, following one another, as halting places, in a circular tour of the central region of Asia Minor. And these cities, it is claimed, were the chief postal centres of the district. It matters little whether the letters were sent to halting places as such, or to postal centres.

In either case, we have only two conclusions before us. One is that we have in these letters a revelation, if so it can be called, of the religious condition of seven primitive and even infant Churches of Asia Minor, selected on account of their postal or camping facilities, which is highly improbable. The other conclusion is that the Seven Churches of Asia Minor are merely symbols, which have furnished names to the seven ages of the Catholic Church, which, as hidden in the future, would themselves be nameless.

The Ven. Holzhauser thought that these names were selected to indicate the chief characteristic of the different ages of the Church. They agree very well with the seven historic periods, into which the Church has been divided. The first, Ephesus, means "counsel," "my wish" and "great distinction." The first age witnessed the will of God in the new counsel of Christianity. It also witnessed the abolition of the Old Law and the destruction of the Temple, and of Jerusalem. Smyrna means "canticles," or "myrrh." Myrrh is an emblem of blood. It characterises the martyrs' age, which ended in the canticles of the Church triumphant. Pergamos means "dividing the horns." It witnesses to the separation of truth from heresy, which took place in this age; also the division of the Church into East and West. Thyatira means "to be lighted up." It is a symbol of the conversion of the nations, which took place in the fourth age. Sardis signifies, "the origin or cause of beauty," referring to the Reformation persecution, which renewed the strength and beauty of the Church in the fifth age. Philadelphia means, "brotherly love," the characteristic of the present age. And Laodicea means "vomiting," significant of the last age of the Church.

Again, the letters were sent to the *Angels* of the Churches. We read in the first chapter of Revelation: "And he had in his right hand seven stars. . . . The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches" (Rev. i. 16, 20). "To the angel of the Church of Ephesus write" (Rev. ii. 1). "And to the angel of the Church of Smyrna write" (Rev. ii. 8). "And to the angel of the Church of Pergamos write" (Rev. ii. 12). "And to the angel of the Church of Thyatira write" (Rev. ii. 18). "And to the angel of the Church of Sardis write" (Rev. iii. 1). "And to the angel of the Church of Philadelphia write" (Rev. iii. 7). "And to the angel of the Church of Laodicea write" (Rev. iii. 14).

The Revelation as a whole is made known to the "servants of God" (Rev. i. 1; Rev. xxii. 6). St John sends it accordingly to his brethren and sharers in tribulation (Rev. i. 9). But our Lord orders these letters to be sent to the "angels" of the Churches. The expression, angels, as used in the Apocalypse, denotes spiritual beings having an executive capacity, who execute the will of God. One of them especially claims our attention, as he declares himself to be, or to have been, in a similar position to St John. But St John was an Apostle, and a leading Apostle.

"And there came one of the seven angels, who had the seven vials, and spoke with me, saying" (Rev. xvii. 1). "And I fell before his feet to adore him. And he saith to me. See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. xix. 10). Later on he adds: "I am . . . of thy brethren the prophets, and of them who

keep the words of the prophecy of this book" (Rev. xxii. 9). The Ven. Holzhauser suggests that this angel was John the Baptist. "My angel" (Mark i. 2), who had died for the testimony of Jesus; and who was engaged in executing the prophecies of the Apocalypse. We assume that the angels of the Apocalypse are the Popes, or chief bishops of the Church, in each succeeding age.

But some writers contend that the angels of the Seven Churches were not bishops, but spiritual beings, in charge of the Churches, as guardian angels. Our Lord held visible stars in His right hand, and He tells St John that these are the "angels" of the Seven Churches. But spirits are invisible and intangible, and do not correspond to the symbolism. Moreover, these angels of the Apocalypse are admonished, warned, praised and encouraged, according to the state of their Churches.

They are very human, judging by the letters. But there were no men of corresponding rank to the executive angels of the Apocalypse, in the Seven Churches of Asia. This is a further reason for treating the Seven Churches of Asia symbolically. If we take the Seven Churches as symbols of the seven ages of the universal Church, the angels are symbols of the heads of the Church in those ages, visible heads, shining like stars in the hand of God, and responsible to Him for the state of the Church. The Vicars of Christ, who are His executive "angels" upon earth, fit in perfectly with the symbolism.

Swete makes a comment on the Greek text with which these letters begin, which confirms the above conclusions. He says: The formula $\tau\hat{\omega} \text{ ἀγγέλῳ} \dots \text{γράψον}$: $\tau\acute{\alpha}\delta\epsilon \lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\iota$ is not epistolary, but prophetic; for γράψον cf. i. 11 19; xiv. 13; xix, 9; xxi. 5. $\tau\acute{\alpha}\delta\epsilon \lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\iota$

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announces a prophetic message, as frequently in the LXX (*The Apocalypse*, p. xli. Note 4).

The letters are not epistles from St John to his flock, although the Churches addressed were in his charge. The voice of God speaks through St John, who wrote these letters from dictation, as the scribe of our Lord. They ring with the sound of Omnipotence. If the letters had been addressed to the great Churches of the first century, including those of Jerusalem, Rome, Alexandria and Antioch, it would have been somewhat difficult to avoid the conclusion that they were in some way intended for the Churches named. But, with the exception of Ephesus and Laodicea, the Seven Churches of Asia were never leading Churches. All of them fell into decay and disappeared in the Middle Ages. The difficulty is to understand why they are mentioned in the Apocalypse. The letters have given them an importance which they never actually possessed. Illustrations have been sought and found in the life-histories of the cities mentioned, which chime in, more or less, with the language of the letters. It would be strange if it were otherwise. But ecclesiastical history has very little to say about most of these Churches, which occupied a single province of the Roman Empire. What history does say about them tends to confirm the suspicion that the letters were allegorical. It is well to note here, that it is not the city, but the angel of the Church that is addressed in each case. Correspondences found between the cities and the letters miss the point, that we look for a connection between the churches and the letters. Thus, Laodicea is said to have been a very rich town. Cicero took his money orders there to get them cashed. But the Church of Laodicea was an infant church, made up of converts,

for the most part from the poorer classes, as always happens in such cases. We may assume that all the Churches were poor and needy when the Apocalypse was written, with the exception, perhaps, of Ephesus.

We have already seen, in a previous essay, that there were special reasons for sending the Apocalypse to Ephesus, of Asia Minor. St John could not send it direct to the head-quarters of the Christian Church at Rome, or at Jerusalem. Nero was at war with the Jews in the year 67. In the autumn of 66 A.D. Eleazar, the governor of the Temple, refused to offer the customary sacrifice for Cæsar. The cohort of Antonia was massacred, and war was declared. At the same time (A.D. 67) persecution was raging against the Christian Church at Rome.

The prisoner of Patmos had no option in the matter. Asia Minor was his nearest mainland and Ephesus the nearest port of call for shipping, following the usual trade route to the East. It was his home. He was head of the Church there, a man of great authority, and he had many friends and disciples there. If only he could get his papyrus MS. conveyed to Ephesus, all the rest would follow. The Apocalypse was, we know, in parts, a secret political document of a dangerous character, calculated to inflame the anger of the Roman magistrates. Hence the need of a cipher in writing it, secrecy in conveying it, and staunch friends to receive it. The Apocalypse was written in Greek and might not have been understood by the majority of the Aramaic-speaking brethren of St John. But there were those at Ephesus who knew Greek, who had been his intimate companions, who could read his mind, who thought in Hebrew, and who could penetrate his cipher. To these men he sent the book, and they copied and dis-

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tributed it, perhaps with verbal messages and warnings as to the need of secrecy.

As Sir W. M. Ramsay shows, proconsular Asia formed at that time the most flourishing and civilised province of the Roman Empire. Its trade routes and traffic facilitated the dispatch of the book to all parts of the Empire.

If the foregoing circumstances explain why the letters were addressed to the Seven Churches of Asia, they lead one also to conclude that had the geographical position of the Revelation been elsewhere, the letters might not have been addressed as they were. Other Churches might have been chosen as symbols.

The letters to the Seven Churches denote Churches long established, and presided over by bishops who ruled them and were held responsible for their spiritual condition. Not only well-organised Churches, but Churches with an historic past, and with a future stretching forward to the end of time. Let us examine the history and position of the Seven Churches of Asia before and after the Apocalypse was written.

When St Paul came to Ephesus, about the year 54, he found certain disciples there, but they had not been either instructed or baptised. He asked them: "Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? But they said to him: We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost. And he said: In what then were you baptised? Who said: In John's baptism. . . . Having heard these things they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had imposed his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve" (Acts xix. 1, 7).

This was, practically, the foundation of the Church of Ephesus. Twelve men were baptised and confirmed by St Paul. It would appear that they received, in Confirmation, the same gifts which the Apostles received on the day of Pentecost, for they spoke with tongues and prophesied; that is, preached as the mouthpieces of God. They were not bishops in the modern sense of the word, regularly consecrated, with mitre and ring and pastoral staff, and with a titular diocese. In the first century, "ancients," or "presbyters" of the Church were placed in charge of Christian groups, large enough to require supervision. These men had not the dignified position, and widespread, recognised authority acquired by bishops of the Church in later times. But their existence in Asia Minor and their office as rulers of the Churches, when the Apocalypse was written, is made clear by the "Acts of the Apostles." About three years after St Paul had consecrated the twelve men of Ephesus, he was shipwrecked at Malta on his way to Jerusalem. He sent from Malta to Ephesus for the ancients of the Church, presumably these same twelve men. "Sending from Miletus to Ephesus, he called the ancients of the Church" (Acts xx. 17). And thus he addressed them: "Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops [*ἐπίσκοποι*] to rule the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts xx. 28). They probably helped St Paul, at Ephesus, and later on, when they were able to do so, started missions of their own in neighbouring cities. Apparently they made Ephesus their headquarters, as St Paul sent to Ephesus for them. They were Lydian or Phrygian Greeks. St Paul does not call them brethren, as he would have done, if they

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were Hebrews. Timothy, apparently, was not amongst them.

It appears, from the Acts of the Apostles, that the Church of Ephesus, the mother Church of the province, was founded by St Paul some thirteen years before the Apocalypse was written. We do not know when the other Churches, mentioned in the letters, were founded. There is no evidence that St Paul himself visited any of them. They were converted by missionaries, who spread out from Ephesus in the course of time. They were, therefore, founded later than 54 A.D.

The exact dates of the acts of St Paul are not known. The only fixed point we have is the date of the death of Portius Festus, the Roman Governor, which took place in the year 62. He it was who sent St Paul to Rome for trial by Nero Cæsar. This is supposed to have been about the year 60-61. Before that St Paul had been imprisoned at Cæsarea for more than two years by Felix, the governor, who preceded Festus. And so we work back to the other dates approximately.

It is plain, at all events, that all of the Seven Churches of Asia were recently founded when the letters were written, and that some of them were in their infancy as Churches. We will examine their condition more closely when we come to the letters to the Churches. Then, too, we will see more clearly the importance of these facts. Writing generally of the history of these Churches, it may be said that they were more or less infested with the Montanist and Arian heresies, which arose in the East, and tormented the Church of the first centuries. When the seat of Empire was transferred from Rome to Constantinople in the fourth century, they came under

the Byzantine influence, and at the end of that century passed into the hands of the Greek Church, subject to the Patriarch of Constantinople. In the fifth century these Churches espoused the cause of Eutyches and embraced the Monophysite doctrine. Various dissensions arose in consequence, but all the forms of Eutychianism were united into the Jacobite Church by the monk, Jacob, in the sixth century. In the seventh century (636) the Arab conquest of Syria brought continual misfortunes upon that part of Asia. As members of the Orthodox Greek Church they shared in the conflicts between the Greeks and the Catholic Church: they denied the supremacy of the Pope and the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son. They were finally excommunicated with the rest of the Greek Church, by Leo IX in the year 1054. In the same century they were overrun by the Seljuk Turks. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the district of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor was devastated by Islamic hordes of wandering nomads, with whom the Byzantine power was unable to cope. At the end of the thirteenth century Mohammedanism reigned supreme in the whole district, and it does so still. The Sultan of Turkey is now lord of Asia Minor. Some of the Churches of the Apocalypse have disappeared entirely. Others, by the good will of the Sultan, survive as Orthodox Greek or Jacobite Churches. Some even of the great cities, which gave their names to the Churches, are gone from the face of the earth. Ephesus and Laodicea are mere heaps of ruins. The first and the last, and also the greatest of the Churches, have long since disappeared. This sad historic record points to the conclusion that the Seven Churches of Asia were but

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vanishing symbols of the ages of a Church which is imperishable.

St John's followers at Ephesus, including the twelve *episkopoi*, who knew well the condition of the local Churches, would not be led into any mistake by the address of the letters. Perhaps St John sent some caution, by word of mouth, through his trusty messengers. At any rate he was back again himself amongst the brethren at Ephesus in the following year, 68 A.D., when probably explanations were given to his immediate council as to questions arising from the letters.

A very curious thing happened to St Paul, not many years before the letters appeared, which would in a manner have prepared the brethren to hesitate about the importance of the Seven Churches of Asia.

When St Paul and Barnabas went forth to preach to the Gentiles. Having "passed through Phrygia, and the country of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word of God in Asia. And when they were come into Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia: and the spirit of Jesus permitted them not" (Acts xvi. 6, 7).

This very startling incident in the history of the early Church had been reported to the "brethren" at Jerusalem. It was well known to all. And there must have been some speculation amongst them as to the reason why St Paul was turned away from the country of the Seven Churches of Asia. A mysterious mark was placed against those Churches. It was a mystery to the brethren, and it prepared them for the mystery of the letters.

It is well known that there were no organised "churches," in our sense of the word, in any of the

cities of Asia Minor in the year 67. There were no bishoprics, no religious buildings, no united congregations of the faithful. Christians were not allowed church buildings for their own worship until the third century. In a great city like Ephesus, there would be, at that time, small gatherings of the faithful, held privately, in different parts, in the houses of leading Christians. Each of them was known as a church. St Paul speaks of "Nymphas and the church, that is, in his house," in an epistle written about the year 62 (Col. iv. 15). Judging by the Acts of the Apostles, the missionary brethren lodged in these so-called churches from time to time. "Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house; with whom I also lodge" (1 Cor. xvi. 19). The epistle to Philemon is sent, not only to Philemon, but also "to the church which is in thy house" (Phil. i. 2).

The whole book of Revelation, and not the "letters" only, was sent to the Seven Churches. "What thou seest write in a book, and send to the seven churches, which are in Asia" (Rev. i. 11). "What thou seest" relates to the visions of the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, of the conflict with Rome and its downfall, and of the New Jerusalem, and of the end of the world. The end of the world is foreshadowed in the Apocalypse, both in the Jewish theme and the Roman theme; also at the beginning and at the end of the book. In the first chapter we read, "Behold, he cometh with the clouds: and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of him: even so: Amen" (Rev. i. 7). And at the end of the book, "He that giveth testimony of these things, saith: Surely I come quickly:

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Amen" (Rev. xxii. 20). And to the Church of Sardis, the last but one of the Seven, "Behold, I come quickly" (Rev. iii. 11). And to the Church of Laodicea, the last of the Seven, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Rev. iii. 20). These passages, and others, relating to the end of the world, indicate that the book was given to the Church of all time. "The last words of the Apocalypse, based on two passages of Deuteronomy, place the Apocalypse on a level with the Torah, and anticipate a place for it among the Scriptures of the Church. It is evident that St John anticipated that it would go down to posterity as a book for the warning and comfort of the whole Church to the end of time" (Swete, *The Apocalypse*, p. xcviij).

We read in the last words, "For I testify to every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book: If any man shall add to these things, God shall add upon him the plagues written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from these things which are written in this book. . . . Surely I come quickly: Amen" (Rev. xxii, 18-20). There is evidence here that the book was sent to Churches which will last to the end of the world. It is a prediction. It foresees the abundant apocalyptic literature of the seventeenth and later centuries, and it warns us not to tamper with the words of the book.

A very remarkable fact will appear as we go through the letters in detail, and that is that they do not allude in any way to the historical record of the Seven Churches as we have placed it before the reader. All of them shared the same fate. They passed into the hands of the Greek Church, were excommuni-

cated by Rome, passed under the Mohammedan yoke, and withered away in the Middle Ages. There is no suspicion of their actual fate to be gleaned from any of the letters. Again, the whole Roman theme of the book is written in the most urgent way against the worship of the Cæsars. The cities of Asia Minor were hotbeds of the Imperial cult. Moreover, they were destined to suffer persecution for the faith in later times. But there is no mention of Cæsar worship in any of the letters; and no mention of suffering, except as a punishment for sin, save in the case of Smyrna. Smyrna is promised ten days' persecution, because it stands for the second, or martyrs' age. The angels of the Churches are addressed throughout as free agents, administering their Churches without let or hindrance. The Seven Churches of Asia went astray in the faith, and were excommunicated from the true fold. There is not a vestige of this in the letters. They are accused of sin, but it is always the sin of lust that is brought up against them. Nowhere is there any doubt thrown upon their faith.

Equally remarkable in another way is the absence of any allusion to St Paul in the letters. St Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, had laboured amongst these Churches, and had converted them to the faith. He had appointed Timothy, a Lycaonian, Bishop of Ephesus; and Epaphras, Bishop of Laodicea, and twelve other bishops. He could write to the Corinthians. The Churches of Asia, salute you: *αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τῆς Ἀσίας* (1 Cor. xvi. 19). In the year 62 A.D., he wrote epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians, in the latter of which he refers to Laodicea. And yet there is no mention of him in any of the letters. This is a strange omission, the more so if he had suffered martyrdom just before the letters were written; that

is, if the letters were intended for the local churches. Stranger still, perhaps, his epistles, which reflect the condition of the Churches in 62, are quite unlike the Revelation letters of A.D. 67.

Another matter which must be noticed, briefly, is that the letters are professedly a revelation of "the things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. i. 1). As addressed to living churches in the year 67, it is hard to see how the letters can be taken as a revelation in the sense of a prediction. They are couched, for the most part, in plain language, and deal with the sins of the Churches, the common sins of corrupt humanity. They warn the Churches, or rather their bishops, they exhort and threaten them, hold out inducements, and in every way seek to keep them in the straight path of religion. There are predictions, but they refer, for the most part, to rewards and punishments.

On the other hand, how majestic is this Revelation, in the first century, of the future ages of the Catholic Church, and how awful those warnings and threatenings, addressed to the Church of centuries deep buried in the distant future.

The letters are the most solemn pleadings to be found anywhere in the New Testament. Our Lord identifies Himself, by one of His chief characteristics, as God, at the head of each message. The Churches are seen in a vision as seven golden candlesticks, with our Lord in the midst of them (Rev. i. 13). He holds seven stars in His right hand, which stars are the angels of the Seven Churches (Rev. i. 16, 20). It is not too much to say that this vision connotes Churches which shed a light upon the whole world, ruled by bishops who shone like stars in the hand of God. Churches and bishops that the world would look up to for light and leading. The Seven Churches of Asia

do not correspond in any way with the dignity and importance attached to them in the vision. If we take the letters as addressed to the seven angels, chief bishops, or supreme Pontiffs, of the future ages of the Church, the balance and proportion between the vision of our Lord in heaven in the midst of His Church, and His promise to His Church, "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20), is well preserved.

We now come to the letters to the individual Churches. In accordance with the indications of their symbolic character, given above, we shall find a great want of correspondence between the Churches pictured in the letters and the Churches named at the head of each letter. On the other hand, the letters correspond accurately with the different ages of the Church, so far as they have gone.

EPHESUS

"To the angel of the Church of Ephesus write: These things saith he who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear evil men: and thou hast tried them, who say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And thou hast patience, and hast borne for my name, and hast not failed. But this I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first charity. Be mindful, therefore, from whence thou art fallen: and do penance, and do the first works. Or else I come to thee, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, unless thou shalt have done penance. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaites, which I also hate. He that hath an ear let him

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hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches: To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God" (Rev. ii. 1-7).

This message comes direct from our Lord, who is represented as in the midst of His Church, sustaining its chief bishop in his right hand. Our Lord dwells upon the past history of the Ephesian Church more than upon that of any other of the Seven. Not, as we know, because Ephesus was an ancient Church, or substantially older than the others. But, as it seems, because Ephesus stands for the first age of the Church, which was then, in the year 67, drawing to a close, and giving place to the second, or martyrs' age, symbolised by Smyrna. The ages of the Church overlap and fade into each other. The first age is commended for its "works," "labour" and "patience," and for its rejection of false apostles.

Justin Martyr mentions Simon Magus and Menander at Antioch. He says that they assumed the title of Christians, and deceived many by their magic arts (Euseb. *Eccl. Hist.* iii. 26). St Paul frequently refers to them. "For such false apostles are deceitful workmen, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 13). St Paul warned the Corinthians against them. False apostles are characteristic of the apostolic age. No man could pretend to be an apostle later than the first century. There is no record of false apostles in the history of Ephesus. Cerinthus of Ephesus was a heretic, who denied Christ. False apostles mark the age, and not the locality.

"And thou hast patience, and hast borne for my name and hast not failed," is a reference to persecution in the past. The Church of the first age, the Apostolic Church, had suffered much persecution from the Jews. There is no need to cite evidence of

a stumbling-block before the children of Israel to eat and to commit fornication: so hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaites" (Rev. ii. 14, 15). Balaam is derived from two Hebrew words, signifying "to destroy people." Nicolaus is derived from two Greek words, meaning "to conquer people." They have a similar idea for their root origin. Soul-destroying habits of lust. In the first age of the Church, idolatry and its practices flourished unashamed. The sacrificial meats offered to the gods were partaken of with lewd festivities, in company with licentious women. St Paul more than once condemns these practices, which were evidently a stumbling-block to his followers. "But as touching the Gentiles that believe we have written (Acts xv. 20, 29), decreeing that they should only refrain themselves from that which has been offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication" (Acts xxi. 25). These things were characteristic of the first age of the Church, and that Church, symbolised by Ephesus, is praised because it hated them.

If we now turn to the contemporary city of Ephesus, we will find that Nicolaitism was prevalent there, but not more so than at Smyrna, Pergamos, Sardis or Laodicea, so far as we can judge. The impure feasts of idolatry were common in all the great temple cities of Asia Minor, which were all given to idolatrous practices. If there is a reference to Nicolaitism in the letter to the Church of Ephesus, and not in that of Smyrna, for example, it appears to be because the name of Ephesus is given to the first age of the Church to distinguish it from the second age, to which the name of Smyrna is given. "Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaites," characterised the early Church. But there is no evidence that it characterised

the local Church of Ephesus. When St Paul wrote to Ephesus, from his Roman prison, somewhere about the year 62 A.D., he thought it necessary to give the Ephesian Christians a solemn warning to lead virtuous lives, saying, "But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints: Or obscenity, or foolish talking, or scurrility, which is to no purpose; but rather giving of thanks. For know ye this, and understand, that no fornicator, or unclean, or covetous person, which is a serving of idols, hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words. For because of these things cometh the anger of God upon the children of unbelief. . . . And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but rather reprove them. For the things that are done by them in secret, it is a shame even to speak of " (Eph. v. 3-13).

It would appear from what St Paul wrote, "Let no man deceive you with vain words," that there were men in Apostolic times who taught the lawfulness of impure living.

The Church of the first age, which "hated the deeds of the Nicolaites," was mainly composed of Hebrew Christians, converts from Judaism, whose religious instincts had always been opposed to idolatry and its surroundings. But the Ephesian Christians were converts from paganism, whose moral sense was somewhat blunted by their having breathed from childhood the impure atmosphere of an idolatrous city. The Nicolaitan passage of this letter, again, marks the age, and not the locality.

"To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God." This

connects the letter with the end of the book of Revelation, where "the tree of life bearing twelve fruits" is seen by St John in a vision of paradise (Rev. xxii. 2). At the end of every one of the letters there is a promise "to him that overcometh," and this promise is an allusion to some passage further on in the body of the book, showing the close relation existing between the letters and the rest of the book. The tree of life is mentioned in Genesis iii. 22. Adam is put out of paradise, "lest, perhaps, he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever."

The fate of the local Church of Ephesus has some bearing on the solution of the question of the meaning of the letters. This Church is told that "I will come to thee and remove thy candlestick out of its place unless thou shalt have done penance." At the present time the local Church has disappeared completely. Does it follow that it failed to do penance? It was a Church founded by St Paul and nurtured by St John the Evangelist. Two of the greatest of the Apostles lavished time and labour upon it. St John returned from Patmos to Ephesus about a year after the Apocalypse was written, and remained with the Church of Ephesus till he died, in the year 98 A.D., a period of thirty years. He was himself the Angel of the Church of Ephesus, to whom this letter is seemingly addressed. We cannot doubt that his Church was a model Church, at all events during his lifetime. In later years all these Churches passed under the jurisdiction of Antioch, and we know from the letters of St Ignatius of Antioch that the Church of Ephesus maintained its position as a model Church in the second century. A council was held there in the year 431 A.D., showing that it still preserved its reputation as a leading Church in the fifth century. It then

fell under the sway of the Greek Church, and eventually disappeared. If the Church of Ephesus alone of the Seven Churches of Asia had become extinct, one might attribute that to the threat contained in this letter. But at the present time the candlesticks of all the local Churches have been moved out of their places. They are all in the hands of the Turks. Ephesus has, at least, been spared this degradation. Nothing remains of it but an historic ruin. Its very name has perished. It is now a Turkish village called Ayasaluk. But the name of Ephesus still remains in the Apocalypse as a symbol of the first or Apostolic age of the Church, and so it has become immortal.

SMYRNA

“AND to the angel of the Church of Smyrna write: These things saith the First and the Last; who was dead, and liveth. I know thy tribulation and thy poverty; but thou art rich; and thou art blasphemed by those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried: and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches: He that shall overcome shall not be hurt by the second death” (Rev. ii. 8-11).

The city of Smyrna was one of the richest cities in Asia. Its fine harbour and central situation on the coast, thirty-five miles north of Ephesus, with trade routes running to the interior, procured it the lion's share of the trade and commerce of the province. It claimed the proud position of Niokoras or temple guardian of the imperial cult, which was conceded to

it by Rome. Its natural advantages are so great that it remains a flourishing city to this day.

The letter is addressed to the Angel of the Church. If there was in the year 67 any specially appointed bishop of the infant Church of Smyrna he was appointed by St John before his exile to Patmos. St Polycarp, its first bishop, known to history, was not born at this time. The letter begins, "I know thy tribulations." This, again, is a reference to persecution in the past, before the Apocalypse was written. But there was no persecutions of Christians in Asia Minor previous to that of Nero, which appears to have reached Ephesus in a very modified form about the year 67. There is no evidence that it affected Smyrna. The tribulations which the Church suffered in the past it suffered at the hands of the Jews. But the local Church of Smyrna had only existed a few years. It had no past commensurate with the beginning of this letter, "I know thy tribulations."

If we take this letter as addressed to the second or martyrs' age of the Church, its meaning becomes clear. Its past was the first or apostolic age, which suffered much at the hands of the Jews. This appears to be borne out by the next sentence, which runs, "Thou art blasphemed by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." One of St Paul's Epistles explains this text. Writing with reference to circumcision, he gives the Apostolic view of the Jews of his time. "For it is not he is a Jew that is so outwardly. . . . But he is a Jew that is so inwardly . . . in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. ii. 28-29). It may be assumed that by the year 67 all Jews were, in consequence of the crucifixion of our Lord, looked upon as the synagogue of Satan. It is

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evident that the Pharisees were so esteemed when St Paul wrote; and the majority of the synagogues were composed of Pharisees.

There were large colonies of Jews in the rich cities of Asia Minor long before the Christian era. In the year 62 B.C. the Roman governor seized the contributions which the Jews of Laodicea were sending to Jerusalem. It amounted to 15,000 silver drachms, "and as the annual tax was two drachms, this implies a population of 7,500 adult Jewish freemen in the district" (Ramsay, *Letters*, p. 420). The magistrates of Laodicea wrote to Caius Rubilius, the son of Caius, the consul, that they had received and would obey his orders concerning the Jews, who were to be allowed to observe their Sabbath and other sacred rites, according to the laws of their forefathers" (Josephus, *Antiq.* xiv. x. 20). Josephus also notes that colonies of Jews existed in other cities of Ionia. "After the like manner do those Jews that inhabit Ephesus and the other cities of Ionia enjoy the same name with those that were originally born there, by the grant of the succeeding princes" (*Apion.* II. 4).

We know from the Acts of the Apostles that the Jewish synagogues were intensely prejudiced against Christianity and stirred up the Romans to persecute it. Their hostility was not confined to the first age of the Church. When the persecution of Christians was officially proclaimed by Rome, in later years, the Jews found increased opportunities of venting their spite.

There is evidence of this in the account of the martyrdom of St Polycarp of Smyrna, in the year 155, furnished by Eusebius. St Polycarp, standing in the arena, publicly proclaimed that he was a Christian. "When this was declared by the herald, all the multitude, Gentile and Jew, dwelling at Smyrna, cried out . . .

and asked Philip, the Asiarch, to let loose a lion upon Polycarp . . . then all cried out together that Polycarp should be burnt alive. . . . The crowd, however, forthwith collected wood and straw from the shops and baths, *especially the Jews, as usual, freely offered their services for this purpose*" (Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* iv. 15). The last line has been italicised to draw attention to the fact that the "Synagogue of Satan," was an active partaker in the persecutions of the martyrs' age. Eusebius, who testifies to this, was a witness of the tenth persecution.

We cannot confine this malevolence of the Jews to the local Church of Smyrna, as we should have to do if we applied this letter in a strictly local sense. The Jews of Ephesus, of Laodicea and of the neighbouring cities were equally inflamed with hatred against the Christian Church. The persecutions were general, and "the Jews, as usual, freely offered their services." It is the age and not the locality that is addressed. The note of suffering and of martyrdom runs through this letter, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison that you may be tried, and you shall have tribulation ten days." The devil appears in the Apocalypse as a persecutor. "And the great dragon was cast out, the old serpent, who is called the devil, and Satan, who seduceth the whole world: and he was cast forth unto the earth" (Rev. xii. 9). "And after the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman" (Rev. xii. 13). The woman here stands for the primitive Church which escaped to Pella. "And the dragon was angry against the woman; and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. xii. 17). And when

“ the beast ” came “ out of the sea,” “ the dragon gave him his own strength and great power.” “ And it was given to him to make war with the saints, and overcome them” (Rev. xiii. 7). Here it is revealed in what way the devil shall try the Church. It is by means of persecution at the hands of “ the beast,” or line of the Cæsars.

“ You shall have tribulation ten days ” is a definite prediction. The nature of this tribulation is shown by the exhortation immediately following, “ Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.” The tribulations are bloody persecutions in which Christians will have to lay down their lives to take up the crown of martyrdom. This corresponds with the opening words of the letter in which our Lord presents Himself to the Church of Smyrna as He “ who was dead and liveth.”

Ten days here, like the days of creation in Genesis, may be taken as ten periods. This fits in so well with the history of the early Church that Smyrna’s claim to represent the second age of the Church can hardly be denied. The martyrs’ age extended from the Neronian persecution to the time of Constantine, A.D. 312, a period of about 248 years.

We cannot apply this message locally. There is no record of ten bloody persecutions at Smyrna. It seems probable that the local Church escaped the first, or Nero’s, persecution. The historic record lies before us, and it shows that whatever persecution Smyrna suffered, she suffered in common with the other members of the Seven Churches. Conversely, they suffered persecution just as much as she did. But it is not mentioned in their messages because they represent other ages of the Church.

The literal application of “ the letters ” involves that

special events predicted for each Church shall be characteristic of, if not peculiar to, each, and not common to all. Tested in this way, Smyrna supports the symbolical, but not the literal, interpretation of the letters.

“ He that shall overcome shall not be hurt by the second death.” The second death is explained at the end of the book of Revelation, in the twentieth and twenty-first chapters, as “ the pool of fire.” Its particular application to this letter is found in Rev. xxi. 8, “ But to the fearful . . . and idolaters their portion shall be in the pool burning with fire and brimstone which is the second death.” Cowardice in the face of persecution leads to the pool of fire. Conversely, “ He that shall overcome shall not be hurt by the pool of fire.” This shows the close relation between the letters and the rest of the book.

Smyrna now belongs to the Sultan of Turkey. “ Out of a population of perhaps 250,000, more than half are Christians, belonging to the Greek Orthodox Schismatic Church.”

PERGAMOS

“ AND to the angel of the church of Pergamos write: These things saith he that hath a sharp two-edged sword: I know where thou dwellest, where the seat of Satan is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith. Even in those days Antipas *was* my faithful witness, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee: because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat and commit fornication. So hast thou them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaites. In like manner do penance: if not, I will come to thee quickly; and will

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fight against thee with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches. To him that overcometh I will give the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone; and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it" (Rev. ii. 12-17).

Pergamos is situated about fifty-five miles north-west of Smyrna on the high road.

The "angel" of the local church of Pergamos is unknown. He was probably one of the twelve Ephesians made bishops by St Paul. In the year 67 there were no bishops at most of the Seven Churches in the sense demanded by the local application of these letters. So far as we can gather from the Acts of the Apostles and St Paul's Epistles they were far from being in that advanced organised condition indicated in the letters. On the other hand, if we take these letters as a revelation of the seven ages of the Church, the letter to Pergamos was addressed to the Head of the Church in the third age. The third age extended from the reign of Constantine the Great until the fall of Rome in the beginning of the sixth century, about 238 years. Its limits are well defined. It began when persecution ended, and it ended when Satan was tied up for a thousand years at the beginning of the millennium.

This age witnessed the division of the Church into the West and East, the rivalries of the East, and the great heresies which were kindled in the East and extinguished in the West. Our Lord is represented with a sharp two-edged sword, which he later defines as "the sword of my mouth," a symbol of justice and judgment and sentence, it may be, of excommunication. "He hath made my mouth a sharp sword" (Isaias xlix. 2). "I have slain them by the words of

my mouth, and thy judgments shall go forth as the light " (Osee vi. 5).

" I know where thou dwellest where the seat of Satan is." This passage is looked upon as the key to this letter. Swete says, "*Θρόνος* in the New Testament is always the seat of office, or chair of state, whether of a judge or king, or of God or Christ. In the Apocalypse the word occurs forty-five times in this sense."

Pergamos was formerly the seat of the Attalid kingdom. It had temples dedicated to Zeno Soter, to Athena, and Asklepios. It had also a temple dedicated to Augustus, and was devoted to the Imperial cult; but it had no pre-eminence, royal or idolatrous, over Ephesus or Smyrna, in the year 67. Why, then, was it called "the seat of Satan"? Examined locally, there was no reason for it. Symbolically, there was. In chapter xvii. of the book of Revelation an angel appears and explains the symbolism of the Roman theme; still, however, in a guarded symbolic way. He refers to "the great harlot, who sitteth on many waters." "And on her forehead a name was written. A mystery, Babylon the Great. And the woman which thou sawest, is the great city, a kingdom which hath dominion over the kings of the earth." This is now recognised as the imperial city, Rome. It was the seat of the beast, and by natural implication the seat of Satan who gave the beast "his own strength and great power" (Rev. xiii. 2). The expression, "I know where thou dwellest" is striking as coming from the Holy Spirit, and seems to denote such things as God alone may know. It is used in the beginning of each of the letters to indicate that God knows the spiritual condition of the Church addressed. Thus to Ephesus, "I know thy works and thy labour and thy patience"; to Smyrna, "I know

thy tribulation and thy poverty"; to Thyatira, "I know thy works and thy faith and thy charity"; to Sardis, "I know thy works, that thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead"; to Philadelphia, "I know thy works. Behold, I have given before thee a door opened"; and to Laodicea, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot." In a few words, the chief characteristics of each Church are picked out, at the beginning of each letter, and form the subject of the letter. But to Pergamos alone it is written, "I know where thou dwellest." This elevates the question of "where the seat of Satan is" to an unusual degree of importance.

God knows where the Church of Pergamos is. That implies that it is not in Pergamos of Asia Minor, which would be common knowledge. There is a mystery here. The key to the mystery is given to us in two phrases; first, "This Church is where the seat of Satan is." If we examine the book attentively, we will find that Rome is the seat of Satan. Secondly: We are told, "And thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith: even in those days Antipas was my faithful witness, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth." This indicates that a persecution raged at the "seat of Satan" in those days, when this Church "held fast the name of Christ, and did not deny the faith," and "Antipas" was martyred there for the faith of Christ.

There was no such persecution of Christians at Pergamos, or anywhere else, except at Rome before the year 67. According to Swete, *ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις* throws the time of the martyrdom back some years before the writing of the Apocalypse" (*The Apocalypse*, p. 35). Nero's persecution began at Rome in the autumn of 64. It fits in with the expression used.

Now if we could show that Antipas was martyred at Rome about that time, we would be on very sure ground.

We are in this difficulty. There is no one of the name of Antipas known to history as a Christian martyr before the year 67. Antipas was no common man. He is described by our Lord in the book of Revelation given to the universal Church of all time, as "My faithful witness." "The Lord gives Antipas His own title, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός (i. 5; iii. 14), qualifying it by a double μου, 'my witness, my faithful one.' Antipas bore witness to Christ, was loyal to Christ, even unto death, as Christ to the Father" (Swete, *The Apocalypse*, p. 36). Antipas is the name of a man picked out as the chief witness or martyr for the faith in the first, or Neronian, persecution. Who else could this be but St Peter?

St Peter's claims to the title of Antipas has been dealt with at some length in my book on the Apocalypse. It is there shown that we have some important clues, all of which go to identify St Peter with Antipas. First the date: Antipas was slain in the first persecution, before the Apocalypse was written. Second, the place: Antipas was slain at Rome, the seat of Satan. Third, the cause: He was slain for the testimony of Jesus. Fourth, his rank: St Peter was our Lord's chief witness upon earth. "Jesus saith to them: But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered, and said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven, and I say to thee: That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to

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thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xvi. 15-19). All the martyrs were faithful witnesses. To one only our Lord had said, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren" (St Luke xxii. 31-32). This is "my faithful witness." St Peter was, in all humility, crucified with his head downwards, at Rome, in June 65 A.D. Fifth, symbolism. There is symbolism in this passage because it refers to Rome, then inflamed against the Church. Hence Rome is not mentioned by name, but is called the seat of Satan; and so also St Peter is not called Peter, but Antipas. The real Antipas, son of Herod the Great, was tetrarch of Galilee, and prince of the district whence St Peter, Prince of the Apostles, came. Sixth, the custom of local names was prevalent when St Peter lived. Our Lord was called the Galilean, also the Nazarene. St Peter possibly may have been sometimes called, familiarly or otherwise, Antipas, from the tetrarchy in which he was born and reared. At any rate, the name is used symbolically; and to call a man by his birthplace and ancestral home is, and always has been, customary. There is no known martyr of the name of Antipas. It seems to have been a convenient symbol for the name of St Peter.*

It is important to note that the key passage, "I know where thou dwellest, where the seat of Satan is," places the angel or bishop of this Church of the third age at Rome. But it was precisely in this third age that the East separated from Rome, and set up a rival Church of its own at Constantinople, claiming the headship of the Church of God. That claim is denied by the Apocalypse, and, what is more, the name of

* St Peter was a well-known Galilean. "After a while they that stood by said again to Peter. Surely thou art one of them: for thou art also a Galilean" (St Mark xiv. 70).

Rome is linked up with the Church of Christ in such a way that our separated brethren who call us Romanists, the Romish Church, etc., are inadvertently bearing testimony to the fact that we are the true Church of God.

“ And thou holdest fast my name and hast not denied my faith.” The Church of Rome, at “ the seat of Satan,” is praised because it did in the third age withstand and condemn the various heresies, the Donatist, the Arian, the Macedonian, the Pelagian, the Nestorian and the Eutychian, which flourished in the east. It was attacked by the Arians and involved in many bloody persecutions in this age for holding fast the divinity of Jesus Christ. The local Church of Pergamos, we have seen, was absorbed by the Greek Church; and it is to be feared that it did not long hold fast the divinity of Jesus, for Arianism was very rife amongst the Greeks.

“ But I have a few things against thee because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam.” We have seen that the reference to Balaam, and the following reference to the Nicolaites, symbolise impurities. Here it is said that some “ hold the doctrine of Balaam ” and of the Nicolaites. That is to say that, in the age of heresies, there were some who actually taught the lawfulness of fornication; and there is reason to believe that such teaching has been given.

At the end of the “ letter ” the reward promised “ to him that overcometh ” is a white stone, “ and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.” This, again, takes us into the midst of the general revelation given to the Church at large. At Rev. xix. 12 we read, “ And his eyes were a flame of fire, and on his head many diadems, having a name written, which no man knoweth but himself.”

The key to this passage in the letter to the Church of Pergamos is taken from the description of our Lord riding forth to battle (chapter xix.). In the same picture occurs the expressions, "With justice he judgeth and fighteth" (Rev. xix. 11), "And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp two-edged sword" (Rev. xix. 15). Our Lord appears at the head of this letter to Pergamos, with "the sharp two-edged sword." This symbolism reflects spiritual warfare in the third age, the age of heresies. Bergamo, the modern Pergamos, is now a Mohammedan town in which many Christians of the Greek Orthodox Schismatic Church are still found.

THYATIRA

"AND to the angel of the Church of Thyatira write: These things saith the Son of God, who has eyes as a flame of fire and his feet like unto fine brass. I know thy works, and thy faith, and thy charity, and ministry, and thy patience, and thy last works which are more than the former. But I have a few things against thee: because thou permittest the woman Jezabel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach, and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat of things offered to idols. And I gave her time to do penance: and she will not repent of her fornication. Behold, I will cast her into a bed: and they that commit adultery with her shall be in very great tribulation, unless they do penance for their deeds. And I will kill her children with death: and all the Churches shall know, that I am he who searches the reins and hearts: and I will give to every one of you according to your works. And to the rest who are at Thyatira: Whosoever have not this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan as they say, I will not put upon you any other weight: yet that which you have,

hold fast till I come. And he that shall overcome, and keep my works unto the end, to him I will give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and as the vessel of a potter they shall be broken. Even as I received from my Father: and I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches" (Rev. ii. 18-29).

Thyatira was situated about forty miles south-east of Pergamos upon the Imperial post road.

When the Apocalypse was written, Thyatira was a small and unimportant place. "The smallest and feeblest, and in general estimation the least distinguished and famous of all the seven cities, except, perhaps, Philadelphia, which might vie with Thyatira for the last place on the list. . . . The history of Thyatira is a blank. . . . Its character and circumstances in the century after Christ are almost unknown" (Ramsay, *Letters*, 323-332). Thyatira is mentioned only once in the Scriptures, and then as a place from whence came a Jewish or pagan woman who was converted to Christianity at Philippi (Acts xvi. 14). If the Ephesian Church was scarcely more than thirteen years of age, a dependent and unimportant place like Thyatira, which had to wait for missionaries from Ephesus, would be probably not much more than ten or twelve years of age when this letter was written. About the last quarter of the second century a sect arose in Asia Minor who denied the manifestation of the Paraclete, and rejected the *logos* teaching of the fourth Gospel and of the Apocalypse. Hence they were called Alogi. They opposed the Montanists who were making great use of visions and prophecies and outpourings of the Paraclete. St Hippolytus, writing in the third century, gives

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some account of the Alogi in his *Defence of the Gospel of St John and the Apocalypse*, a book which has been lost. St Epiphanius attacked the Alogi in his book on *Heresies*, written in the fourth century, and founded, apparently, on the lost work of Hippolytus. According to Epiphanius, one of the principal arguments of the Alogi against the Apocalypse was that no church was then to be found at Thyatira (Hær. li. 3). We must attach some value to this statement of the Alogi, as they were living in the province, and used this argument in serious religious controversy. It was a question of fact. If there was a Church at Thyatira their argument would have been futile and would have brought forth a contradiction. But the question of fact is not denied.

It does not follow, however, that there was no Church at Thyatira when the Apocalypse was written. When we consider that even one household of Christians constituted a Church, as the expression was used in the first century; and when we reflect further that Christianity certainly existed at Ephesus, Laodicea, Colossa and Hierapolis some years before the Apocalypse was written, it would be unreasonable to suppose that Thyatira was altogether devoid of Christian families. Demetrius, the silversmith of Ephesus, cried out, about the year 56, " This Paul by persuasion hath drawn away a great multitude, not only of Ephesus, but almost of all Asia " (Acts xix. 26). The conception of a Church at the end of the second century, the time of the Alogi, was changed from what it had been in the first.

We are entitled to assume, however, that the Church of Thyatira was both small and recently formed in the year 67, and that by the end of the second century it still lacked the constitution of a recognised Church.

Of its subsequent history very little is known. Nothing that would identify it with the Church of Thyatira of the Apocalypse. On the contrary, there is a startling contrast between this "letter" and the local Church it is nominally addressed to. The letter to the Church of Thyatira is the longest and one of the most important of the seven. It deals with a long-established and well-recognised Church, having an assured and prolonged future. There are remarkable predictions about it. And it is said that "all the Churches shall know" of the fulfilment of one of them.

If we apply this letter to the fourth or millennial age of the Church, which lasted about a thousand years, it may be said to coincide with it from the historic point of view in a remarkable manner. The millennial age extended from the fall of Rome, in the beginning of the sixth century, to about the beginning of the sixteenth century; a thousand years. This period has been called by the Church "the ages of faith," and by the world "the dark ages." What the world calls "dark" from a spiritual point of view, generally means "light," and vice versa. But both the Church and the world speak of this period as the Middle Ages. In this, it may be, that we have "built better than we know," for Thyatira is the middle Church of the seven, and consequently stands as the symbol of the Church of "the Middle Ages" in the Apocalypse.

We have to examine Thyatira from without, as the promised millennium, and from within, guided by the letter to the fourth Church of the Apocalypse.

Its millennial aspect we will glance at very briefly here, as it has been noticed at some length in my book on the Apocalypse. When the barbarous hordes which overran Europe during the period of the break up of the Roman Empire settled down in

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kingdoms of their own, Rome of the Popes was at peace for about a thousand years, and this peace may be dated from its last invasion by the Ostrogoths in the year 551. The Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, to give it its full name, made use of this peace to stamp out the remnants of the Arian and other heresies which attacked the divinity of Jesus Christ, and to extend the blessings of Christianity and civilisation to all the nations of the earth. It completed the evangelisation of the world which had outgrown the apostolic age. Its missionaries penetrated everywhere. Christianity was firmly established throughout Europe, and in parts of Asia, Africa and America. Monasteries were opened in which learning and the Arts were cultivated as the handmaids of religion. Universities flourished. And the whole of Europe was adorned with magnificent shrines, cathedrals and abbeys, dedicated to the worship of Jesus Christ.

Frederick Harrison, who cannot be accused of seeing things through "Roman" spectacles, in an essay on the thirteenth century, gives a very good picture of the millennium at its prime. He says: "It had great thinkers, great rulers, great teachers, great poets, great artists, great moralists and great workers. . . . There was one common creed, one ritual, one worship, one sacred language, one Church, a single code of manners, a uniform scheme of society a common scheme of education, an accepted type of beauty, a universal art, something like a recognised standard of the Good, the Beautiful, and the True" (*Survey of the Thirteenth Century*).

The latter end of the millennium, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, witnessed a gradual fading away of the illumination of Thyatira, and the growth of the

degenerate and stricken Church of Sardis. The material prosperity of the Church culminated in the Middle Ages. Its revenues from lands and property of all kinds, from endowments and bequests, increased enormously. It became one of the richest institutions of the world. In the train of wealth came luxury, and in the lap of luxury lay vice. "Then the concupiscence of the flesh, and of the eyes, and the pride of life extended to the clergy of the Church. These, secure of the indulgence of a corrupt age and thinking it safe to do so, gave themselves up to voluptuous living, and fell into presumption, as ordinarily happens in such cases. But these were the vices of Jezabel, the wife of Achab." So wrote the Ven. Holzhauser in his book on the Apocalypse, written in the first half of the seventeenth century. He died in the year 1658. Dissension within the Church (the great schism of the West) and dissatisfaction without, paved the way for the great upheaval which took place in the sixteenth century; and the plague, called the Black Death, in a great measure precipitated this movement by depriving large areas of Europe of their working clergy. This plague appeared in the fourteenth century (1347), after nine hundred years of the millennium, and marked its declining years.

But with all its faults and failings the millennial Church never faltered in its faith. The Lutheran movement in Germany developed, in the hands of worldly princes, into a revolt against the Church. In many quarters its property was plundered and its followers persecuted. Then the Council of Trent was held, and it revived the discipline, purity and religious zeal of the Church. That council may be taken as the closing work of the millennium (1545-1563).

We now turn to the letter which reveals the inner

life of the Church of Thyatira, as foreshadowed in the Apocalypse. The "angel" of the local Church is not known. If Thyatira had a separate bishop, he was probably one of St Paul's "ancients." The letter opens very impressively. "These things saith the Son of God, who has eyes as a flame of fire." The penetrating eye which sees through the minds and hearts of men, even in the centuries of the future. It is added, "I am he who searches the reins and hearts," in allusion to concupiscence. "I know thy works, and thy faith, and thy charity, and thy ministry, and thy patience, and thy last works which are more than the former." This is great praise. No other Church is eulogised in this way except Ephesus, the Apostolic Church, whose message opens in the same way, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience" (Rev. ii. 2). This establishes a link between these two Churches. Thyatira is praised for its ministry, a word which connotes ministration, or missionary effort. This seems to show that Thyatira, like Ephesus, was a great missionary Church, in the sense that the first or Apostolic Church was a missionary Church.

The *local* Church of Thyatira was not a missionary Church. What missionary effort there was in that quarter issued from the Mother Church of Ephesus. Thyatira had little strength to spare. If the "works" here referred to the spread of Christianity, we can only understand the allusion by applying it to the millennial age, which supplemented and completed the work of the Apostles in converting the nations to Christianity. "And thy last works which are more than the former" would apply to the Council of Trent. The first works and the last works denote a considerable interval of time.

Next comes the accusation. It is the usual one, ap-

parently, of concupiscence, clothed in the symbolism of Jezabel. This Church "permitted the woman Jezabel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and eat of things offered to idols." This accusation resembles that of the Church of Pergamos, "of Balaam who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat and commit fornication." But in the case of Thyatira it is not the children, but the servants, who give way to luxury; and in the Apocalypse the servants of God held a high position as ancients and leaders of the Church. There appears to be a veiled reference to the same accusation in the further sentence about those "who have not known the depths of Satan." If we may take it that these passages are aimed at loose living on the part of the clergy, or a considerable section of the clergy of the Church of Thyatira of the Middle Ages, they are in accordance with historic facts. The local Church of Thyatira, on the other hand, does not seem to have had a recognised hierarchy at any time.

"And I gave her time to do penance, and she will not repent of her fornication." If we measure this time by the extent of God's mercy to his Church, it becomes a long time. We have here a Church praised beyond all others for its faith and charity and ministry and patience and for its works of old and for its last works. A very zealous missionary Church, gradually corrupted by the luxury and effeminacy which came in the train of gradually acquired wealth. The historic picture seems to call for the centuries of the Middle Ages.

"Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and they that commit adultery with her shall be in very great tribulation unless they do penance for their deeds."

Swete says, " In this case there is a sharp contrast between the luxurious couch where the sin was committed and the bed of pain. . . . βάλλω does not imply violence, but merely the prostration of sickness" (*The Apocalypse*, p. 44). I will cast her, *i.e.*, the Church of the fourth age, into a bed of sickness. A great part of this letter is a prediction of the corruption of this Church and its punishment for lack of repentance. In the next sentence the sickness is specified. " And I will kill her children with death; and all the Churches shall know that I am he who searches the reins and hearts." Most modern commentators are agreed that the word, Θάνατος, death, in this sentence means the plague or pestilence. Hence it is predicted that the children of this Church, lay and clerical, will be cast down on a bed of sickness and die of the plague. As we have seen, the Church of the millennium, in punishment for its sins, as it appears, was visited by the plague, which devastated it in the fourteenth century.

The local Church of Thyatira and the other six Churches of the Apocalypse occupied an area about twice the size of Yorkshire, through which a constant stream of traffic flowed. The rules of hygiene were probably altogether unknown or ignored in this crowded and insanitary area. Plague or pestilence is remarkably contagious. Given an outbreak of plague at Thyatira it would have rapidly involved the whole area. " In the epidemic of the fourteenth century," Hecker remarks, " Tartary, Mesopotamia, Syria, Armenia, were covered with dead bodies. . . . In Caramania and Cæsarea none were left alive. On the roads, in the camp, in the caravansaries unburied bodies were alone to be seen" (*The Epidemics of the Middle Ages*, p. 21). At that time the Seven Churches

of Asia had ceased to exist. According to Gibbon, the great plague, "which depopulated the earth in the time of Justinian . . . spread to the east over Syria, Persia and the Indies" (*Decline and Fall*, III. p. 162). Whatever plagues there were in that part of Asia Minor, all the Churches, we may be sure, suffered alike. Hence it appears that it is not Thyatira of Asia Minor but the fourth age of the Church that is in the mind of St John in painting this picture. "And all the Churches shall know that I am he who searches the reins and hearts." And all the Churches of Christendom did know to their cost of the pestilence called the "Black Death," which swept the Church in the fourteenth century.

"Whoever have not this doctrine and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will not put upon you any other weight." It is reasonable to suppose that a great part of the Church was free from vice and was spared to carry on its work with renewed zeal and favour. "Any other weight" means any other punishment. Persecution was withheld until the next age, symbolized by Sardis.

"That which you have hold fast till I come." This, presumably, refers to the true faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. It is a significant commentary on this that Thyatira, now called Akhissa, is a Mohammedan town containing a few Greek Orthodox Christians, and that it ceased to hold the faith centuries ago. But it may be hinted that the Church of the millennium has also passed away. It has not gone, but is changed, through Sardis, into the present-day Church of Philadelphia. And the admonition is changed from, "That which you have hold fast till I come" into, "Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man may take thy crown."

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The centuries that have passed have brought the second coming nearer. To us it is said that it will "come quickly." There are also unmistakable signs in the times we live in that the divinity of Jesus Christ is attacked and must be again defended by the Church. Pius X. strives to restore all things in Christ. That is the motto of his reign.

The message continues: "He that shall overcome, and keep my works unto the end, to him I will give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and as the vessel of a potter they shall be broken; even as I received from my Father." Sir W. Ramsay says, "Thyatira of all the Seven Cities seemed in every way the least fitted by nature and by history to rule over the nations" (*Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 333). He and others have noticed the perplexing incongruities between the letters and the local Churches. But the power here given to individual angels or chief bishops of the Church who "overcome," is spiritual power, not temporal rule. The rod of iron was the shepherd's crook, tipped with iron, with which the shepherd ruled his flock. It is the crosier or pastoral staff, the symbol of a bishop's rule over his Church. This is a promise that the Church at large will still rule the nations of the earth, in a spiritual sense, in spite of its fall and punishment. It connects with our Lord's appearance, in chapter xix., towards the close of the Apocalypse, when He rides forth to victory on a white horse. "And he shall rule them with a rod of iron" (Rev. xix. 15). It strikes a note of assured success for the continued labours of the Church.

"And I will give him the morning star." This is addressed to an individual, or individuals: the same who were given power over the nations. The "morn-

ing star " is Jesus Christ Himself, as he tells us in the closing sentences of the Apocalypse. " I Jesus have sent my angel, to testify to you these things in the Churches. I am the root and stock of David, the bright and morning star " (Rev. xxii. 16).

Again we notice the dependence of these letters on other parts of the Apocalypse for the elucidation of their meaning.

When we compare the letter to the Church of Thyatira with the history, or want of history, of the local Church, we find no agreement between them. This is an enigma, and there is no solution to it except by way of symbolism. When we compare the same letter with the history of the Church in the Middle Ages, we are surprised to find how closely they agree. Thyatira, which signifies to be illuminated, throws a strong light upon this question.

SARDIS

" AND to the angel of the Church of Sardis write: These things saith he, who hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die. For I find not thy works full before my God. Have in mind, therefore, in what manner thou hast received and heard, and observe, and do penance. If then thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief; and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee. But thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments: and they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy. He that shall overcome shall thus be clothed in white garments: and I will not blot his name out of the book of life: and I will confess

his name before my father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" (Rev. iii. 1-6).

The City of Sardis was situated on the great Roman road, about thirty miles south-east of Thyatira. Ramsay says, "When the seven letters were written, Sardis was a city of the past, which had no future before it" (*Letters*, p. 368). It is now a hamlet, called Sart, ruled by the Turks, and there is no Christian Church there. Nothing is known of the angel of this Church in the year 67 A.D., and very little about the Church itself. Its ecclesiastical history is almost a blank. Eusebius tells us that Melito, Bishop of Sardis, 165-196, wrote a commentary on the Apocalypse of St John. As a symbol of the fifth age of the Church it extended from the millennium, which ended about 1550, to the beginning of the nineteenth century (about 1829, Catholic Emancipation), a period of about 279 years. During the greater part of this time the Church suffered persecution in one direction or another.

This is the Church of the "Reformation" period. It may be divided geographically into two portions, a Latin portion which escaped persecution, and a non-Latin portion which was the theatre of the Reformation, and witnessed a considerable shedding of Christian martyrs' blood.

Our Lord, who sends down the Holy Spirit, and who holds the bishops of the Seven Churches, like stars, in His right hand, finds fault with the Church of Sardis. It is the post millennial Church which has survived the plague; which is hardly conscious of its failings, and does not realise that the plague was meant for its correction. "I know thy works, that thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art

dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die. For I find not thy works full before my God." There is no praise here. It is all blame. The wording is curiously reminiscent of the plague. "Thou art dead," and "the things which are ready to die." But spiritual matters are referred to. "Have in mind, therefore, in what manner thou hast received and heard, and observe and do penance." The Church is warned to return to an earlier and better model, and to do penance. "If thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee." This admonition is addressed to individuals in the Church. "But thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments: and they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy." There were many great saints in the fifth age of the Church, notably St Charles Borromeo, St Philip Neri, St Vincent de Paul, St Ignatius, St Teresa and St Alphonsus Liguori. "He that shall overcome shall thus be clothed in white garments." This passage seems to refer to martyrdom. The expression to overcome is used in that sense in the second or martyrs' age which is told, "He that shall overcome" shall not be hurt by the second death (Rev. ii. 11). The white garments are indicative of martyrdom. The martyrs of the Apocalypse who cried out, "How long, O Lord," were given white robes.

In England, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Norway and Russia, the Church of Sardis was persecuted, and it issued from that persecution in a more spiritual frame of mind. Where persecution raged longest and most furiously, in Ireland, for example, the Church was immeasurably strengthened. But the Church of the Latin races needed correction also, and

it was given to them by way of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. By these scourges, of war and persecution, this Church was purified and prepared for its great mission in the next or Philadelphian age.

“ And I will not blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.” Whose name? “ He that shall overcome.” These promises are made to the martyrs of the “ Reformation ” period. Towards the end of the Apocalypse the book of life is introduced and explained. “ And I saw the dead great and small, standing before the throne; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works ” (Rev. xx. 12). The promise not to blot the martyrs’ name out of the book of life is equivalent to that made to the martyrs of Smyrna. “ He that shall overcome, shall not be hurt by the second death ” (Rev. ii. 11). This letter predicts a period of persecution for the Church in the fifth age, called Sardis, symbolising what is known as the Reformation period. It is a well-defined era in the history of the Church, as clearly marked as any of the preceding ages. But there are few specific predictions concerning it which would enable us to compare the letter with the local Church of Sardis. We have seen that the letter addressed to Ephesus refers to the first age of the Church. That the letter to Smyrna reveals the second age. That to Pergamos the third age. That to Thyatira the fourth age, therefore this letter must refer to the fifth age rather than to the local Church of Sardis. The following letters to Philadelphia and Laodicea throw much further light upon the subject, and strengthen this conclusion.

PHILADELPHIA

“AND to the angel of the Church of Philadelphia write: These things saith the Holy one and the True one, who hath the key of David: he that openeth, and no man shutteth; shutteth, and no man openeth: I know thy works. Behold, I have given before thee a door opened, which no man can shut: because thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name: Behold, I will bring of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie. Behold I will make them to come and adore before thy feet. And they shall know, that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to tempt them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. He that shall overcome, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches (Rev. iii. 7-13).

Philadelphia is about thirty miles south of Sardis on the high road. It was one of the least important cities of the province. Pliny mentions nine cities of Asia which were centres of a *conventus* (*H. N.*, v. 29). Philadelphia and Thyatira are not amongst the number, showing them to have been small places. Philadelphia was at one time very subject to earthquakes. Strabo, B.C. 25, calls it a city full of earthquakes. The inhabitants were sometimes driven to encamp outside the city. All that part of Asia Minor

was a centre of seismic disturbances. Sardis and Laodicea both suffered severely. The town of Laodicea was partially destroyed by an earthquake which took place in the year 60 A.D. (Tacitus, *Annals*). Severe earthquakes in the area of the Seven Churches might help the "brethren" to the conclusion that these Churches were symbolic.

Philadelphia still exists as a Turkish town, under the name of Ala-Shehr. It is the seat of a Greek Orthodox bishop, who has about a thousand Christians of that schismatic body under his charge. The prevailing religion is Mohammedan. Since the fifteenth century the Crescent has dominated the Cross where once stood Philadelphia.

The message to the Church of Philadelphia issues from "The True one, who hath the key of David: he that openeth, and no man shutteth, shutteth, and no man openeth." It continues, "I know thy works." The works are not specified, but their nature is evidenced by the context. "Behold, I have given before thee a door opened, which no man can shut: because thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." This is the reward of the Church enfeebled by long suffering during the Reformation period, which, in the midst of persecution, clung steadfastly to the true faith. The promise and prediction of the "door opened" is made to the Church of Philadelphia by the "True one," "who has power to open, and no man can shut." Sir W. Ramsay remarks, "There can be no doubt what the opened door means. It is a Pauline metaphor which had passed into ordinary usage in the early Church. At Ephesus '*a great door and effectual was opened*' to him" (1 Cor. xvi. 9). At Troas also, '*a door was opened*' for him (2 Cor. ii. 12). He asked the

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Colossians to pray ‘ *that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ* ’ (Colos. iv. 3). In these three Pauline expressions the meaning is clearly explained by the context; a ‘ *door opened* ’ means a good opportunity for missionary work ” (*Letters*, p. 404).

Let us endeavour to estimate the effect of this promise as applied to a local Church like Philadelphia or another. Its door is kept open by the Divine power, and no man can shut it. Missionaries pass out, and a constant stream of converts flows into it. It becomes known as a specially endowed centre of religious propaganda. Men of wealth and learning flock to it from all parts. Its Churches multiply. It becomes a rich and populous city, overflowing with the offerings of wealthy converts and pilgrims. Its fame spreads in an ever-widening circle. It rivals Jerusalem of old, or modern Rome, as a centre of religion, churches, monuments, arts and influence. It fills a large space in ecclesiastical history.

If these things, or anything like them, happened in the Church of Philadelphia, in Asia Minor, ecclesiastical history would surely have something to say about it. We have the writings of St Ignatius of Antioch, Eusebius and others; but there is not the slightest indication that anything of the kind ever happened at Philadelphia. Quite the contrary. Philadelphia was, in its day, one of the least of the Seven Churches of Asia. We know very little about it, because of its obscurity. What missionary effort there was in Asia Minor proceeded from Ephesus, and later from Antioch. Its door so far from being open was closed centuries ago. By no stretch of the imagination can we apply this letter to it. “ Behold I have given before thee a door opened which no man

can shut." We know the broad lines of its history. How it shared in the general excommunication of the Greek Church pronounced by Leo IX., and how its door was closed by the Turks. It belongs to the past, and these predictions have not been fulfilled in its regard. But prophecies are not made void. The letter indicates the age in which we live, and not the vanished Church of Asia Minor.

If we turn now to the sixth age of the Church, symbolised by the name of Philadelphia, or brotherly love, we will find reason to believe that we are living in the midst of it. The prediction fits the present age, and we see it in process of fulfilment. Our age was purified and prepared for its great mission by the sufferings it endured in the Reformation period. The Church of the Reformation, symbolised by the name of Sardis, came to an end about the Victorian era, and Philadelphia grew out of it. There is nothing but praise for this Church. It attracts converts, amongst other reasons, because it is a blameless Church. Even now the stream of conversions to this Church is large and continuous, not here or there, but in every part of the world. The Oxford movement was one of its earliest manifestations in England. The English-speaking world has felt the impulse of the Philadelphian movement towards the Catholic Church more than other nations, because it has enjoyed more than others the liberty of conscience of the Victorian era. But the lineal descendants of the great Queen-Empress are endowing other nations with this great blessing. Even in Russia a Victorian Prince has lately opened the door to the Church of Philadelphia. It would require a volume to trace the growth of the Church throughout the world since the beginning of the Victorian era. A single instance will suffice to

show in what manner the prophecy of this "letter" is being fulfilled. These statistics are taken from a recent New York Journal: "At the beginning of the nineteenth century the thirteen States of North America were all Protestant. Later on, Virginia, then Pennsylvania, and finally Massachusetts thought fit to allow Catholic citizens to hold public offices; and before the year 1806 had elapsed, the Catholics numbered 50,000, among whom were forty priests, directed by Bishop Carroll alone." After fifty years, the same paper tells, the following statistics were realised. "Total number of Catholics in the States, 3,000,000; 1,800 priests and 33 bishops." Later on, this alarming growth still continuing, Catholics could boast of possessing, out of a population of 80,000,000, in North America, between thirteen and fifteen millions; of seminaries they had seventy-eight, colleges 684, parochial schools 3,900, churches 10,465, while this wide vineyard was being tended by 11,998 priests eighty bishops, thirteen archbishops, and one cardinal."* It may be argued that the Church is losing ground in France. It is true that the government of that country is in the hands of atheists and that the Church is suffering persecution at the present time; but we have had this object-lesson before, as Smyrna and Sardis testify. The result has always been the same. The Church of France will rise again, in God's time, strengthened and purified by persecution.

The letter continues, "Behold, I will bring of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are

* A census of the archdioceses and dioceses of the United States, taken in the first quarter of 1908, gives the total Catholic population as 13,877,426, being an increase of 788,073 for the last year; number of priests, 15,665; churches, 12,515; seminaries, 84; boys' colleges, 200; girls' schools, 697; elementary schools, 4,443, average attendance, 1,113,906.

not, but do lie: behold I will make them to come and adore before thy feet: And they shall know that I have loved thee." If we take this promise as addressed to the present age, there is some difficulty in applying it to the Jews. The earliest Jewish converts to Christianity who accepted the Messiah and followed Him, naturally looked upon the Jews who rejected Him as false Jews. As St Paul taught, it was not the exterior observance but the inward spirit that marked the true Jew of his time. But the Jews of to-day "who say they are Jews," in point of fact, are Jews, and are accepted as such by the whole world. But we may look upon the Jews in this passage as figurative. In wording a message to the nineteenth century in a book given to the first, it was necessary to employ the symbols of the first century. This promise is a continuation and specific illustration of the "door opened." It means that even those Christians who were foremost in persecuting the Church aforetime, in the erroneous belief that they were the true followers of Christ, would be converted to the one true fold, and make submission to the Vicar of Christ.

There is still greater difficulty in applying this prediction to the local Jews and local Church of Philadelphia in Asia Minor. Considering all that we read in the Acts of the Apostles of the tone and temper of the Jews in Asia Minor in the first centuries; considering, also, that the synagogue of Satan is accused of "blaspheming" the Church of Smyrna, not so far away from Philadelphia; considering, again, that there is no record of Jewish conversions on a great scale at Philadelphia, either in Christian or Jewish writings, it does not appear that we can read this message into the history of the local Church. Besides, it is not easy to understand how or why Jews should recognise the

Divine mission of the local Church of Philadelphia and not that of the neighbouring cities with which they were in daily communication.

It may be said that the conduct of the Jews of Smyrna and that of the Philadelphian Jews relate to two different periods in the history of the local Churches. Smyrna is condoled with, because it is blasphemed by the Jews. Philadelphia is promised in a future time, "Behold, I will bring of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews." But if we agree that some parts of these letters refer to the future, we admit their symbolic character, and one cannot draw the line at any century, unless the event predicted is known to have been fulfilled. In this case there is no record of fulfilment, and no reason why the Jews should "come and adore before the Church of Philadelphia," passing by the more imposing Churches of Ephesus and Laodicea. The history of Antioch, which became the Mother Church of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor, is known. Antioch was noted by historians for the frequent collisions between the Jews and Christians which took place there. There was much bloodshed in these conflicts from the fourth to the seventh century" (Leclercq, *Dict. d'Arch. et de Liturg.* chap. i. col. 2396). "Those who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie," are those who say they are Christians, yet deny the Divinity of Christ and persecute His Church, at least, with the sword of the mouth, the sharp tongue.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to tempt them that dwell upon earth."

There is evidently a very important prediction here of some great and universal temptation which

will come upon "all the world," and to which the world will yield itself, but from which the Church of "Philadelphia" will be Divinely protected. This is not a thing which could have happened in the past without anyone knowing anything at all about it, and yet, if the prediction referred to the local Church of Philadelphia, it must have happened in the past, as that Church belongs to the past; but there is no record of it. Its miraculous preservation from "the hour of temptation" which came "upon all the world" has escaped notice completely. Here we have a fact well calculated to impress "all the world," and it is not chronicled by any historian, lay or clerical.

We are forced to the conclusion that the Church of Philadelphia is the symbol of the Church of the sixth age, to which, in reality, this letter is addressed. What "the hour of temptation" may be and when it will come is a matter which closely concerns the present age.

"Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown." This admonition of the speedy second coming of Christ is not addressed to any of the preceding Churches. Philadelphia, the last Church but one, is warned of the approaching end of the world; and, as we shall see, Laodicea, the last Church of the Seven, is given a sharper warning. But neither of these local Churches were destined to witness the end. We must, therefore, take them as symbols of the last ages of the Church. "Behold, I come quickly" is a warning addressed to the Church of our own age. At the end of the book our Lord says, "Surely I come quickly. Amen" (Rev. xxii. 20).

"He that shall overcome I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God." The expression, "He that

shall overcome," ὁ νικῶν is used in the letter to the Churches of Smyrna, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. Smyrna and Sardis, we have seen, were martyr Churches. We shall find that Laodicea also is marked out for bloody persecution. "To him that overcometh," τῷ νικῶντι is employed in the letter to the Churches of Ephesus and Pergamos. To Thyatira alone it is said, "He that shall overcome and keep my works to the end," indicating the manner of overcoming, viz., by works.

The use of the expression, "He that shall overcome," in the letter to the Church of Philadelphia, raises the presumption that it may have to face bloody persecutions; but this is not borne out by the promises which follow, which throw light on the expression. In this case such a one is figured as a pillar in the temple of God. "And he shall go out no more, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and my new name." When in the Roman theme of the Apocalypse judgment is about to be executed on the pagan Empire, "the first fruits to God and to the Lamb" stand forth. "And I saw and behold a Lamb stood on Mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written in their foreheads" (Rev. xiv. 1). And when the "New Jerusalem" appears, it is said of the inhabitants, "His servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads" (Rev. xxii. 3-4). These are great promises equivalent to those made to the Churches of Smyrna and Sardis; but there is no reference to white garments or any other special indication of martyrdom.

LAODICEA

“AND to the angel of the Church of Laodicea write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, who is the beginning of the creation of God. I know thy works; that thou art neither cold, nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold, nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest: I am rich, and made wealthy, and I have need of nothing: and thou knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be made rich; and mayest be clothed in white garments, that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear: and anoint thy eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. Those whom I love, I rebuke and chastise. Be zealous, therefore, and do penance. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the gate, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that shall overcome I will grant to sit with me in my throne: as I also have overcome, and have sat with my Father, in his Throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches” (Rev. iii. 14-22).

Laodicea, the last of the Seven Churches, is situated on the high road about forty miles south-east of Philadelphia. It is close to Hierapolis and Colossa, and a traveller from Philadelphia must pass Hierapolis to reach it. There was a Church at Hierapolis at the time the letters were sent forth. Why was it passed over? It may be that Hierapolis was left out in favour of Laodicea because the latter was a much more important town and the usual halting-place of St John when visiting these Churches. It may be also

because the Church of Laodicea was to take a leading place amongst the Churches of Asia Minor and to hand down a history of great use to us in this important inquiry.

Laodicea is now a ruin, and shares with Ephesus the peculiar distinction of having been destroyed by the ravages of time. It is a significant fact that these two cities, the first and the last of those which gave their names as emblems of the ages of the Church, should now be buried in the dust of ages. The letter is addressed to "the angel of the Church of Laodicea."

There were bishops in that region when St Paul wrote from Rome to the Colossians about the year 62. He writes, "For I would have you know what concern I have for you, and for them who are at Laodicea" (Col. ii. 1). "Epaphras saluteth you. . . . For I bear him testimony that he hath much labour for you, and for them who are at Laodicea and them at Hierapolis: Salute the brethren who are at Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the Church that is in his house. And when this epistle shall be read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans: and read you that which is of the Laodiceans" (Col. iv. 12-16). Archippus seems to have been bishop of Colossa, close to Laodicea. St Paul wrote, "And say to Archippus: Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" (Col. iv. 17). There is evidence here that this group of Churches, Laodicea, Colossa and Hierapolis, were comparatively advanced in their organization in the year 62. The picture drawn in the Apocalypse, in the year 67, of a lukewarm Church, puffed up with pride and riches, and blind to its own shortcomings, is so well known, that the name of Laodicea has become a by-word of reproach among Christian writers. It would

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strike one as very strange, therefore, to find that Laodicea, when the letter was written, and subsequently, was one of the most zealous Churches of the Seven, if we had not already found many other indications of the purely symbolical character of these Seven Churches of Asia.

St Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians, above quoted, puts that Church and the Church of Laodicea on a par, as regards religious zeal, in the year 62. The two Churches were only eleven miles apart. He was well pleased with the Colossians. Apparently he was equally pleased with the Laodiceans. So far from censuring the latter Church, he encourages intercourse with it, and says that Epaphras had much labour for Laodicea.

In later years Laodicea rose to a high position amongst the Churches of Asia Minor. In Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible* we read of Laodicea that "it was the leading bishopric of Phrygia throughout the Christian period."

Melito, Bishop of Sardis about 170 A.D., relates that when Servius Paulus was proconsul of Asia, Sagaris suffered martyrdom. Polycratis, Bishop of Ephesus, calls him Sagaris, bishop and martyr, who rests at Laodicea (Euseb. iv. 26, and v. 24). The Church of Laodicea is frequently mentioned by Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea A.D. 310, in his *Ecclesiastical History*. Thelymidus was bishop of Laodicea, A.D. 251-254, and Eusebius 254-260.

Eusebius, the historian, says: "At Laodicea the Church was governed by Eusebius, the successor of Socrates, who was sprung from an Alexandrian family. The occasion of his removal was the affair respecting Paul of Samosata, on which account, having come to Syria, he was prevented from returning home

by those who took great interest in the Scriptures there. He was also an amiable instance of religion among our contemporaries, as may be readily seen in those extracts from Dionysius, which we have inserted above. Anatolius was appointed his successor, a good man, as they say, in the place of the good. He, too, was an Alexandrian. But for his learning and skill in the Greek philosophy he was superior to any of the most distinguished men of our day, as he had attained unto the highest eminence in arithmetic, geometry and astronomy, besides his proficiency in dialectics, physics, and rhetoric. . . . With two such pastors in succession was the Church of Laodicea honoured by the Divine interposition. . . . And Anatolius also dying, Stephen was made bishop of that Church, the last bishop before the persecution, a man greatly admired for his knowledge of philosophy and other branches of Greek learning. But he was not equally disposed towards the Divine faith, as the progress of the persecution evinced, in which he was proved to be timid and cowardly rather than a sound philosopher. The affairs of the Church, however, were not likely to be ruined by this, for these were corrected and restored by Theodotus, who, under the special providence of God, the Saviour of all, was ordained bishop of the Church there, and by his deeds proved the reality of his name—given of God—and of his office as bishop ” (Eusebius, bk. VII. 332).

Láodicea was represented at the Council of Nicea by its bishop, Nounechios, A.D. 325. Later in the fourth century, A.D. 360, a council was held at Laodicea, showing it to have been, at that time, the leading Church of the province. The canons of this council, or synod, are still quoted by theologians with great respect.

The city of Eumonia, one of the Laodicean group, was so thoroughly Christian at the beginning of the fourth century that the great body of the people and magistrates alike took refuge in the Church in the tenth persecution, and were burnt alive. Apameia, another city of the Laodicean circuit, according to Ramsay, had a like fate.

We shall see presently that the Laodicean letter reflects, not the state of the Laodicean Church, but that of the seventh and last age of the world.

The message is from "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, who is the beginning of the creation of God." There is a warning in these opening lines of the coming end of all created things.

The message begins, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." As we have seen, when the Apocalypse was written, the local Church of Laodicea was in its infancy; but St Paul was very well pleased with it, and it grew to be the leading Church of Phrygia. A Church that is neither "cold nor hot," that neither fears nor loves God, denotes an old Church that has lost its first fervour. Experience teaches us that worldly prosperity is the usual cause of this lukewarmness, and the letter mentions it at once. It goes on, "Because thou sayest: I am rich and made wealthy, and I have need of nothing; and thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor, and blind and naked."

This is the sequel of the "door opened." The uninterrupted prosperity of the Philadelphian age ends in a Church renowned for its wealth. The usual result follows, the Church becomes tarnished by the world, and loses its fervour. It becomes a worldly Church,

“wretched,” “miserable,” “poor,” “blind,” and “naked,” spiritually. All this seems to chime in with the predictions made of the seventh and last age of the Church, some of which we quote.

Now the Spirit manifestly saith that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error and doctrine of devils” (1 Tim. iv. 1). St Peter says, “In the last days there shall come scoffers with deceit, walking according to their own lusts, saying: Where is his promise, or his coming? For since the fathers slept, all things continued so from the beginning of the creation” (2 Peter iii. 3, 4). Again, our Lord said, “And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat and drink; they married wives, and were given in marriage.” . . . Likewise as it was in the days of Lot: They did eat and drink; they bought and sold; they planted and built. And in the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed” (Luke xvii. 26–30). In the days of Noe, “God seeing that the wickedness of men was great on the earth, and that all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times, it repented him that he had made man on the earth. . . He said: I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth” (Genesis vi. 5–7). And in the days of Lot, “The Lord said: The cry of Sodom and Gomorrha is multiplied, and their sin is become exceedingly grievous.” And Lot pleaded, “I beseech thee, saith he, be not angry, Lord, if I speak yet once more: What if ten should be found there? And he said: I will not destroy it for the sake of ten” (Genesis xviii. 32). And ten just men were not found in it, and the city was destroyed. In the

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coming Laodicean age, wickedness will so abound that our Lord will destroy the earth. And Daniel says of the last days, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. . . . Many shall be purified and made white and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand" (Dan. xii. 4-10).

St John says, "Little children, it is the last hour: and as you have heard that Antichrist cometh, even now there are many Antichrists: whereby we know that it is the last hour" (1 John ii. 18). He explains further what he means by Antichrist. "And every spirit that dissolveth Jesus is not of God, and this is Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he cometh" (1 John iv. 3). One of the surest signs of the seventh and last age of the Church will be a widespread denial of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and that, too, apparently, by persons calling themselves Christians. Even now there are ominous signs that the work of "dissolving Jesus" has begun.

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried by the fire, that thou mayest be made rich; and mayest be clothed in white garments, that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear, and anoint thy eyes with eye salve that thou mayest see."

The Church is counselled to exchange its worldly wealth for spiritual riches obtained by suffering—"gold tried in the fire." The reference to white garments, which follows, seems to indicate persecution as the means of grace employed to rehabilitate the symbolic Laodicea. This is made plainer in the next sentence, "Those whom I love I rebuke and chastise." God loves His Church, therefore He will purify it by chastisements, foreshadowed by white garments,

the martyrs' robe. "Be zealous, therefore, and do penance," is in the same key.

There is no evidence that the local Church of Laodicea in Asia Minor fell away from grace, at any time, into the sad condition depicted in this letter. It passed into the Greek obedience in the fullness of its prime, and thenceforth shrivelled with the other seven branches, broken off the stem of the Catholic Church.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock." This warning that the second coming of our Lord is imminent, is not found in the letter to any other Church. Philadelphia is warned that our Lord is coming, and coming quickly, but to Laodicea only is it said, "I stand at the door and knock."

The Church of Laodicea in Asia Minor to which this letter is nominally addressed, having ceased to exist long ago, needed not this warning.

"If any man shall hear my voice and open to me the gates I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." This promise is addressed to individuals.

"To him that shall overcome I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also have overcome and have sat with my Father, in his Throne." Our Lord overcame by His death upon the Cross. Martyrdom is foreshadowed as impending in the last days of Laodicea, the last age of the Church.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." This admonition is repeated verbatim in every one of the letters addressed to the Seven Churches. It is unusual, and therefore suggestive of some deeper meaning than appears on the surface. With reference to the beast from the sea (Nero) we read, "If any man hath an ear, let him hear."

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He that shall lead into captivity, shall go into captivity: he that shall kill by the sword, must be killed by the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints " (Rev. xiii. 9-10). This passage is symbolical of the death of Nero. In the belief of his approaching end the saints (that is, the faithful) waited patiently. But it required an ear trained to the suggestion of symbolism and a mind alert to translate its figures to reach the true meaning. When our Lord related the parable of the sower, " He cried out: He that hath ears to hear let him hear. And his disciples asked him what this parable might be. To whom he said: To you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God: but to the rest in parables: that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand " (Luke viii. 8-10).

The warning, " He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches," is a warning that the matter is symbolical. There are many other indications, as we have seen. But these words would appear to be a direct warning to the " brethren " of the Apostolic age to take these letters symbolically.

It is of great interest to ascertain now how the Seven Churches of Asia received the book of Revelation; in what estimation they held it: and how they acted upon the letters. We will suppose for the sake of this inquiry that St John's administrators at Ephesus, who knew his mind, sent papyrus rolls, copies of the Apocalypse, to all the Churches named. There is no record of their reception of the book. It is not probable that they were capable of receiving it or expressing an opinion upon it, in a corporate capacity, at that time. But in the course of years some of these Churches attained an important position as Catholic bishoprics. They could then speak their minds about

the book, and they did so. In considering this subject we have to bear in mind that the key to the book was lost at the end of the first century, and that the letters to the Seven Churches are an integral part of the book and would stand or fall with it. But they are written, comparatively speaking, in plain language, and if their lessons came home to the individual Churches, and the truth and point of each were generally recognised in Asia Minor, it would tell greatly in favour of the book. It would enter into the discussion of its merits, and we should hear of it. The Alogi, the Antimontanists and the Antimillenarians attacked the Revelation, and successfully, in the East. But it does not seem probable that they would have been able to do so if it had the support of the Seven Churches of Asia.

Dionysius of Alexandria, we have seen (in a previous essay), describes the book as having little or no authority in the East before his time. He wrote about the year 240 A.D.

A celebrated council of the Church was held at Laodicea in the year 360. It was attended by the Bishops of Asia Minor. An opportunity was then afforded the Seven Churches to show, in their corporate capacity, how they valued the book of Revelation, which was addressed and sent to them. They dropped it tacitly out of the Canon of the Scriptures. It does not appear in Canon 60 of the Synod of Laodicea (C. 3,606). The record of the book in Asia, to which it was sent, is very instructive. One would suppose that if the book was disparaged anywhere, it would find supporters in Asia. However incomprehensible some parts of the book appeared to be, the prefatory letters to the Seven Churches of Asia were plain.

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As a matter of fact, the great Churchmen of Asia, beginning with Papias of Hierapolis, first misunderstood and then rejected the book. There is no mention of the letters in the polemic about the genuineness of the Revelation. They seem to have been taken by both sides as symbolical, or incomprehensible.

It is very remarkable that the Apocalypse did not stand in the Peshitta or original of the Syrian New Testament. Gwynn believes that it was unknown to the Syrian Christians for four hundred years, with the exception of those who could translate Greek. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catach.* iv. 33-36) does not name it among canonical books, nor does it appear in Canon 85 of Apost. Const. (Zahn II. 177 ff.; 197-190 ff.), nor is it in the list of Gregory of Nazianzus (ib. 216 ff.), nor in the so-called Synopsis of Chrysostom (ib. 230). Neither Chrysostom nor Theodore of Mopsuestia mentions the book; and Theodoret does not accept it. It does not appear in the Chronography of Nicephorus, or in the List of Books (ib. 298-290 ff.). The Nestorian and Jacobite Churches did not receive it (Bousset, p. 25) (*Hastings's Dictionary of the Bible*).

Knowing what we know now of the Seven Churches of Asia, can we suppose that the awful and magnificent visions and predictions of the Apocalypse were specially intended for them? The answer to that question is this. Those Churches ran their short course and died out centuries ago, without succeeding in interpreting the Apocalypse. It was a sealed book to them, and they rejected it.

When we reflect on the very recent formation of all of these Churches when the book was written, we are driven to conclude that letters, which were obviously intended for long-standing Churches, which

developed, in the course of years, marked characteristics, were not meant for them. When we consider the early extinction of all of these Churches, which were apparently made sharers in the book of Revelation, its hopes and predictions, down to the end of time, we are forced to the same conclusion.

If we apply these messages to the seven ages of the Catholic Church, they correspond with the facts of history in a very remarkable way; and, what is more, they strengthen the Divine claim of the Catholic Church on all serious students of the Apocalypse.

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